THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 61 GHOST IN THE SHELL: THE MOVIE

WIZARD®

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ISSUE NO.61
SEPTEMBER 1996

NEIL GAIMAN'S

Lady JUSTICE

#4

"CONTROL FREAK"

PART 3

Written by RICH RAINEY

Penciled by CHRIS MARRINAN

Inked by MARK HEIKE

Cover by DANIEL BRERETON

ON SALE IN JULY. FOR MATURE READERS

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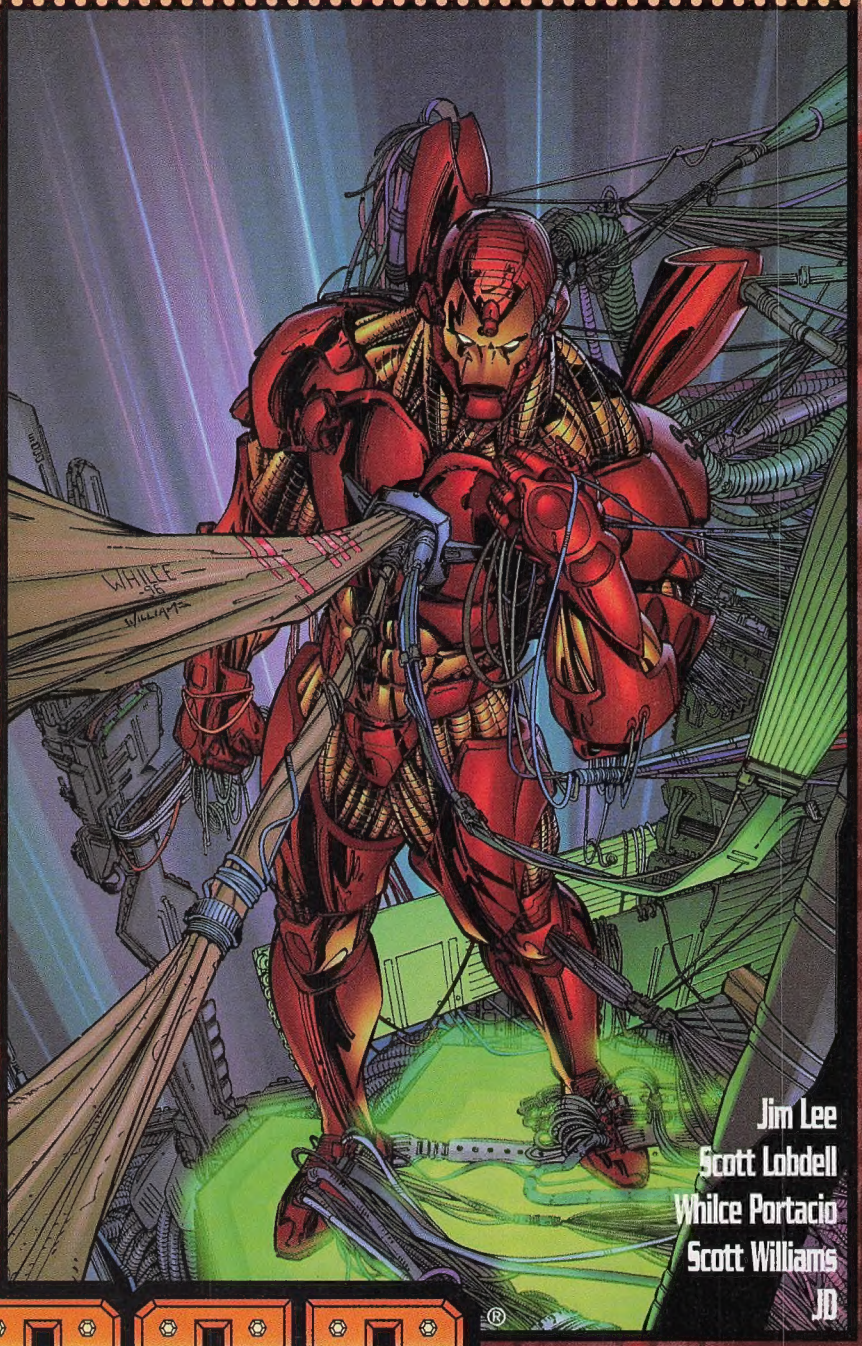
The Test of Mettle Begins



IRON MAN®

MONTHLY FROM MARVEL® COMICS

HEROES REBORN.

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WIZARD®

Number 61
SEPTEMBER 1996

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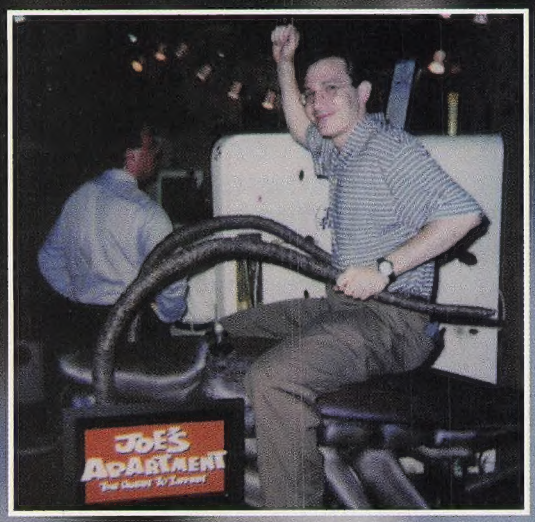
80 ***HEROES REBORN* #1/2**
Holy crap in a hat! This is your only chance to get the scorching Heroes Reborn #1/2 comic featuring two separate stories: an FF/Iron Man and a Captain America/Avengers. Oh yeah, did we forget to mention that these stories are a prelude to the #1 issues of those new Marvel titles? You can start drooling now.

AAAAIII!!!! GET IT OFF ME! GET IT OFF ME!



BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT

We've been getting lots of mail asking for more coverage of three topics: more of the independents, more manga and more toys.

Every month we have a challenge when we put together our editorial mix—when *Wizard* first started, there wasn't a great deal of comic book stuff beyond the pages of the comic books themselves. Today, comic books pervade every area of the entertainment and product licensing world. This is where the challenge comes in. Now that comic book characters have grown beyond the pages of comics, we need to stay focused on what the appeal of comic books really is, as well as the areas attached to comics, and create a careful balance every month. We need to let you know what's going on in the whole world of comic books and its characters—including TV, movies, toys, cards, CD-ROMs, etc.

Now, back to my original point. We have already made a tremendous commitment to increased coverage of independent comics. The last few months, we've done major features on the talent of the future and the fun, weird, violent or serious books they've created—David Lapham's *Stray Bullets*, Rob Schrab's *Scud*, Paul Grist's *Kane*, Terry Moore's *Strangers in Paradise*, the list goes on and on. And you will continue to see that emphasis on the small press, spotlighting some of the top talent in the industry.

Our Toy Section brings you all of the new releases of figures before anybody else has seen them, plus a great price guide for the figures you already own or are looking for. And finally, we've had tremendous response to the contest and articles we've run on manga, so you can count on more of what you enjoy.

Also this month, the incredible *Heroes Reborn* #1/2 debuts—our first Marvel #1/2 ever! With creators Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, this is a "can't miss" opportunity.

We've got a great Kingdom Come poster featuring the work of Alex Ross and the best of what's going on in comic books.

Enjoy reading—see ya at the cons!

Gareb S. Shamus

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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MAGIC WORDS

Many Mutant Missives

It was an X-, X-, X-, X-Month this time around as most of the mail swirled around two subjects: "Onslaught" and our "You Can't Handle the Truth!" X-Men feature in *Wizard* #58. Readers were speculating heavily as to who Onslaught was (Yes, Virginia—I read most of this mail before the revelation in *X-Men* #54 that Onslaught was Charles Xavier's "dark side."), and most people actually got it right. The clues were well placed.

Our dangling X-plots feature was very well received, with many people commenting on the "mystery third Summers brother" plotline. The overwhelming consensus? Adam-X, a.k.a. X-Treme, who's occasionally seen in the X-Men's star-faring adventures, is the missing Summers sibling. Sounds logical to me.

'Course, there was still a lot of "Heroes Reborn" mail, with everyone wanting to know how the big event is going to affect the Marvel Universe. It's got a lot of people confused. Speaking of confused, let's see if we can clear this guy up...

Dear Wizard,

Can someone explain Image Comics to me? What's all this with Highbrow Entertainment, Todd McFarlane Productions, Top Cow Productions, WildStorm Productions and whoever else I might have missed? Who owns who? Are they all in the Image Universe or not? And how will WildStorm and Extreme doing the "Heroes Reborn" titles affect all this?

Dan Powers
Omaha, NE

Well, I guess you're already aware that Marc Silvestri's Top Cow Productions is no longer part of Image (see "Wizard News" for the skinny). Anyhoo, think of Image as a lot of separate little companies instead of one big company, because that's essentially what it is. Erik Larsen's Highbrow, Sam Kieth's "I Before E" and all the other Image branches operate independently and are controlled separately by their respective owners. There is a loose framework of an "Image Universe," as can be seen by the semi-frequent crossovers. Check out the Gen[13]/Maxx or Medieval Spawn/Witchblade books, f'r instance. But the confederation is a loose one. What happens in a Rob Liefeld Extreme book probably has no ramification in a Jim Lee WildStorm book and vice versa. When the independent Image sub-companies decide to cross over, they do. And that's about it.

The Marvel "Heroes Reborn" titles are not part of any Image continuity. They remain Marvel books, although the characters in these titles will be in a "pocket universe" outside regular Marvel continuity. How the old Marvel Universe and the new "pocket universe" will interact—if they do at all—remains to be seen.

Dear Magic Words,

Am I the only one in the universe who likes "Sailor Moon"? I can't find the comic book anywhere! I've never heard any mention of a "Sailor Moon" comic in your mag and I've seen every episode in existence. Please tell me if the comic book is going to hit the U.S. any time soon. I'd be very, very grateful.

Secha Stradling
Springfield, OH

To the best of our knowledge, there are only two hardcover comic adaptations of the popular anime series. They're entitled* Meet Sailor Moon *and* Friends and Foes. *Both are published by Kondansha America.

All-knowing Wizard People,

I need help. I recently got my first tattoo. I now have Spider-Man on my left shoulder for life! The picture I used was from the 1994 Flair Marvel set, card #5. I need to know which artist drew this card because I want to have Venom and Carnage added to my tattoo collection, but I would like to have them based on drawings from the same artist. It would be very helpful to me

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

RETRO NAME. NEW ATTITUDE.

TEEN TITANS

BY DAN JURGENS
AND GEORGE PÉREZ.

COMING IN AUGUST.

Monthly From

Looking for the nearest comics shop?
Call toll-free 1-888-COMIC BOOK.

Don't miss the TEEN TITANS sneak preview
in SUPERMAN #116! on sale in July.

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if you could help me out.

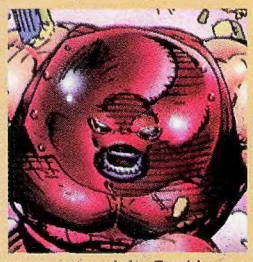
Chris Blair
Collinsville, IL

Yeah, I'll help you out, tattoo-boy. Get a dose of common sense, a lower threshold for pain, better taste in what you want to look like for the rest of your life and a public service pamphlet on how hepatitis can be spread.

But just because I'm a big softie, I called Fleer and asked them. Unfortunately for you, the art on the card front is uncredited and they have no record of who did it. Looks like you're out of luck. May I suggest a tattoo of the Invisible Woman instead? I've got one. It's keen.

Dear Wizard,

I am writing to you in response to a question that was asked in "Magic Words" in issue #57 about what would happen if the immovable Blob were hit by the unstoppable Juggernaut. If we suspend disbelief for a moment and assume the Blob to be truly immovable and the Juggernaut to be truly unstoppable, then we are talking about an infinite level of inertia. In theory, one of two things would happen:



A) Since kinetic energy has a direction and momentum dependent on whatever propelled the matter, and potential energy only has direction and momentum toward the Earth's center of gravity, the Blob would stand still, and Juggernaut's kinetic energy would be redirected. He would bounce off of the Blob and be sent in a different direction. He still would not be stopped—he would just be redirected. That or...

B) There would be a complete potential/kinetic energy transfer, with the Blob transferring all his potential energy to the Juggernaut and Juggy transferring all his kinetic energy to the Blob. Each character's effect would transfer to the other. The result would be that the Blob would be sent flying and Juggernaut would be stopped dead in his tracks.

Adam Hoover
thehoov@nts-online.net

Ah, nothing like another chance to show the world that I skipped out of most of 6th period physics in my senior year. I like theory A. The Blob remains immovable and the Juggernaut remains unstoppable. In this example, the Blob actually acts like a big fat ramp. Depending on how Juggy hits him and at what angle, the Juggernaut could wind up anywhere.

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this nor, is there a prize.

Dear Wizard,

Let's play pretend for a minute or two. Let's say someone gave you the power to pick 10 comic titles—any titles at all—and give them whatever writers and artists you wanted. These titles would then be published every month with these creative teams, but the catch is that these 10 titles will be the *only* ones on the shelves. What would you do? Here's what I'd pick:

Title	Writer	Penciler	Inker
Firestorm	John Byrne	John Byrne	Terry Austin
Captain America	Mark Waid	Joe Madureira	Robert Jones
Savage Dragon	Erik Larsen	Erik Larsen	Erik Larsen
Venom	Alan Moore	Stephen Platt	Jimmy Palmiotti
Superman	Kurt Busiek	J. Scott Campbell	Scott Williams
Hulk	Frank Miller	Dale Keown	Karl Kesel
Thor	Peter David	Bart Sears	Danny Miki
Batman	Alan Grant	Adam Kubert	Andy Kubert
Spider-Man	Todd McFarlane	Todd McFarlane	Greg Capullo
Power Man and Iron Fist	Garth Ennis	Jim Lee	Scott Williams

So what do ya think? Are any of these interesting? Or are they all pretty sucky? Anyway, thanks for your time. Keep up the awesome work.

Shane Waugh
Cincinnati, OH

I think your picks are both interesting and sucky. You'd probably think the same of mine. After all, the first two choices I'd make would be* Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos *by Stan Lee, Dick Ayers and Johnny Severin and* American Flagg! *by Howard Chaykin, Chaykin and Chaykin.

You made some interesting choices. No* Fantastic Four? *No X-titles at all? And creators? I have a hard time imagining comics without John Buscema, Dan Jurgens, Gil Kane, Grant Morrison, Ann Nocenti, John Ney Rieber, Alex Ross, Steven Seagle, Bill Sienkiewicz or Tim Truman, to say nothing of many of the creators you already mentioned.

I don't think I'll take part in this little exercise—yet. I'd rather see more "Dream Teams" first. So feel free, you people out there in reader-land (or any of you actually listed below), to send some in. Then maybe I'll whip one up. If I do, I'll make sure that Neal Adams, Mike Ploog and Jim Steranko all have regular jobs. Oh, yeah—and that Neil Gaiman guy, too.

Dear Wizard,

I have been an active reader of your magazine for years. It is definitely the best there is. But, man! You guys bitch a lot!

In the past few years, you've whined about the "Generation X" TV-movie, *Superman/Doomsday: Hunter/Prey*, Batman movies, and don't even get me started on the Spider-Clone. I was just wondering—do you guys like anything? I personally liked all the items I listed above, but that's just my opinion. I realize that you are entitled

to your opinion, but what the heck do you guys like, anyway?

Ryan Scott Ottney
New Boston, OH

Personally, I liked Hunter/Prey. Okay, you're right. We do bitch a lot. But we also praise. In just the past few months, we've devoted big-time space to singing the praises of Legion of Super-Heroes, Daredevil, Kingdom Come, Strangers in Paradise, Scud and Green Lantern. So it ain't like we do nothing but grind axes. Basically, we're a semi-large and very disparate staff, so our likes and dislikes are varied. Tip for the in-depth Wizard reader: Look at the little things. Look for the line or two in "Picks" or look at the "Staff Picks" sections in the price guide. That's the stuff we really like.

Dear Superwizards,

In the *Wizard* comic price guide, why do I see "Marvel/Timely" listed as a publisher for early Marvel comics? What is Timely?

Brian Jones
Virginia Beach, VA

Way back in the day when Stan Lee was just knee-high to a pencil sharpener, the company that we know today as "Marvel Comics" was called "Timely Comics." Timely changed its name to Atlas Comics in the early 1950s and became Marvel Comics with the publication of Fantastic Four #1 in November, 1961.

Dear Magic Words,

How do you judge the Top 10 back issue and Top 100 new comics? And what are the odds of winning one of your contests? It seems like my chances are slim to none.

Jogindra Siewrattan
Margate, FL

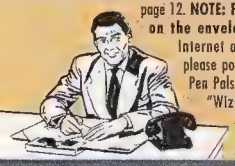
It's like this: The "Top 10 Comics" listings are determined by surveys. Many come in from retailers who participate in the making of our price guide, and many come in from readers like you. If you'd like to exercise your democratic initiative, please do so by filling out the survey found at the back of the comic book price guide in this very issue. And raise a starry plough on high and sing a song of freedom while you're at it.

The "Wizard Top 100," on the other hand, is determined strictly by orders. We ask retailers how many copies they ordered of all of a month's titles, they tell us, we compile the list and there the rankings be.

As to contests, your chances vary. We have received as few as seven entries for a contest (Construct a Pitt sculpture out of meat—yuck!) and as many as 16,000 (random drawing for a Lady Death statue). So keep trying!

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Meet your fellow comic fans! Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the Magic Words address on page 12. **NOTE: Please write your age on the envelope.** If you want your Internet address listed instead, please post your info in the new Pen Pals message board on our "Wizard World" forum on America Online. Hey, make a friend!



PEN PALS

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New York, NY 10025
Likes: *Impulse*, *Gen*[13], Acclaim titles

Fabio Genesini
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R. Dona Nina Zanotto,
195-Sto. André
São Paulo, Brazil 09180-100
Likes: All Bat-titles, *Lobo*, *X-Men*

Sean Debenham
Age: 18 Sex: Male
15 Surveyor Street
Queanbeyan 2620
N.S.W., Australia
Likes: All X-titles, *Avengers*, *Thor*

Savin Gatchalian
Age: 13 Sex: Male
8821 E. Eagle Creek Dr.
Tucson, AZ 85730
Likes: *Generation X*, other X-titles, *X-Files*

Sarah Best
Age: 16 Sex: Female
213 Winter Street
Williamsport, PA 17701-6746
Likes: X-titles, *Bone*, *Sovereign 7*

Alistair Rockoff
Age: 10 Sex: Male
3716 NW 135th Circle
Vancouver, WA 98685
Likes: *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four Unplugged*

Monica Talia
Age: 18 Sex: Female
Via Aldo Moro No. 8/1
20090 Buccinasco (MI), Italy
Likes: *The X-Files*, *Spawn*, *Batman*

Wizard,
Do you know if the Marvel/DC crossover "Amalgam" comics are going to be ongoing or are they all just temporary one-shots?

Paul Gonzalez
Queens, NY

Well, they were planned as one-shots, but given the success that they enjoyed, new Amalgams or sequels to the existing ones would seem a sure thing. The closest thing we'll get is DC's* All Access *mini-series in October teaming Marvel and DC characters like Wolverine/Batman, X-Men/JLA, Superman/Spider-Man and others. Will we see Amalgam characters? Guess we'll have to wait and see.

Dear Wizard,
Who makes Maggie the Cat?

Steve Trapp
Dayton, OH
FunkyMan99@aol.com

That'd be Mike Grell.* Maggie the Cat, *the espionage-laden tales of a female cat burglar, is published monthly by Image Comics.

Jim,
Where the heck did Arthur Adams disappear to? In my opinion, he's one of the greatest artists in the business. Unless he's dead, tell him he's the most!

Also, when is *Monkeyman & O'Brien* gonna come out? It was supposed to be out like two years ago.

Matt Lukals
Beavercreek, OH

Arthur Adams is alive, so I called and told him he's the most! He said in return, "The first part of a three-issue* Monkeyman & O'Brien *monthly mini-series ships July 31. It's published by Dark Horse Comics."

To Jimmy-boy,
Black Sabbath wrote a really cool song back in the early '70s entitled "Iron Man." This song rules, and I was wondering if the Iron Man comic character was the basis of this song or if Ozzy Osbourne was just drunk again.

Robert Hart
Staten Island, NY

Probably both. Marvel's Iron Man was indeed the inspiration for the song and Ozzy was probably tanked (or something) when he wrote it. However, it should be noted that Mr. Osbourne has recently switched to a healthier lifestyle and no longer imbibes the demon rum or any other distilled spirits.

Dear Brother Jim,
What would happen if Lobo fought Silverchair?

Chet Collins
Naperville, IL

Well, lessee: Lobo can frag darned near anything this side of Czarnia, and Silverchair is made up of a bunch of 17-year-old punks. So the answer is Lobo. But if Lobo took on the band Los Lobos, I'd give the nod to Los Lobos. Some of those guys are pretty beefy.

Dear Wizard,
How in the world did Superman (a.k.a. Clark Kent) get into school and get a job without a social security number? I am assuming he doesn't have one, on account of him being an alien and all.

Joe Hecht
Jefferson, WI

Ah, but he does! Clark Kent's social security number is 092-09-6616. Now that you know it, don't use it to set up a false Cayman Islands checking account or anything, okay?

Hey Wiz-Man!
1) Why doesn't Gambit zap things with his power through his eyes like he did back in *Uncanny X-Men #266*?

2) Why are Marvel's "2099" titles getting axed?

3) What is creamy nougat made of?

4) Who do you think is the cooler composer: Mozart, Bach or Beethoven? Wolfgang Amadeus has my vote!

5) How many fibers are intertwined in a Nabisco Shredded Wheat biscuit?

6) Why does Onslaught's helmet look like Magneto's old helmet?

7) Does one person in the X-Mansion wash everyone's laundry or do they wash their own? Do they use liquid or powder?

8) What is edible underwear made of and how many flavors are available?

9) How would one achieve becoming supreme ruler of all that lives and breathes?

10) What causes stupidity?

Danielle Love
Winter Springs, FL

Danielle Love? Danielle Love? Now that's a name I could love!

1) Now that's a damn good question. We called Marvel, and spokesman John Cerilli said, "He's taken a more tactile approach to charging up objects. He prefers to feel things before he blows them up."

2) Marvel says they're not getting axed, they're getting combined. A new double-sized monthly,* 2099: World of Tomorrow, *is launched in July.

3) I'm not coming near that one.

4) Mozart by a mile. 'Course, he's still no Neil Young.

5) I pulled one apart at breakfast this morning and came up with 253. That's for the big ones, not the spoon-size.

6) John Cerilli on bass: "The answer will be revealed during the course of the Onslaught story this summer."

7) John Cerilli on percussion: "Each washes their own. While certain members prefer liquid, others prefer powder. Of course, this eternal question has been a source of discussion in the X-Men ranks. We can only hope everyone's favorite mutants don't come to blows over it." Personally, I just don't wanna clean the lint trap after the Beast has used the dryer.

8) We called the kind folks at Spencer Gifts and they said that they had no idea what edible underwear is made of. They only carry one flavor: chocolate-strawberry. Retail is $5.99, which is quite the bargain if you ask me, especially considering what you usually get after you eat the underwear. Funny thing is, I've

PENPALS

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Age: 15 Sex: Male
516 Hilby Ave.
Seaside, CA 93955
Likes: *DC vs. Marvel, Uncanny X-Men, Wolverine*

Mike Davis
Age: 18 Sex: Male
Rt. 2, Box 254A
Samson, AL 36477
Likes: Original art, inking, penciling

Stephen Hughel
Age: 12 Sex: Male
towntrvl@cyberenet.net
Likes: *Gen[13], Amazing Spider-Man, X-titles*

Aaron Krieger
Age: 21 Sex: Male
NNGHH@aol.com
Likes: *Preacher, X Men, Watchmen*

Eugene Morton
Age: 13 Sex: Male
UGN96@aol.com
Likes: *Spawn, Wolverine, X-Men*

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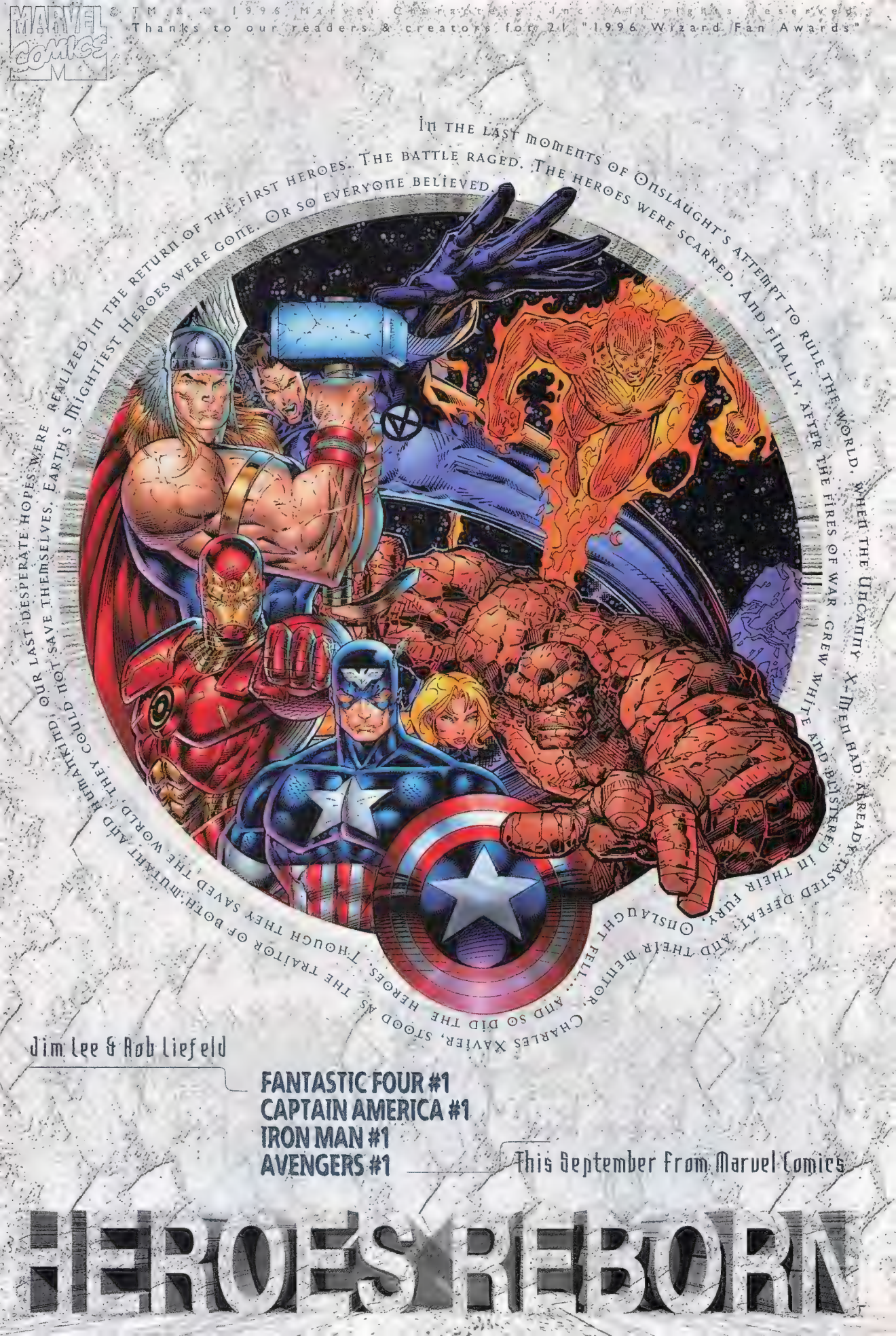
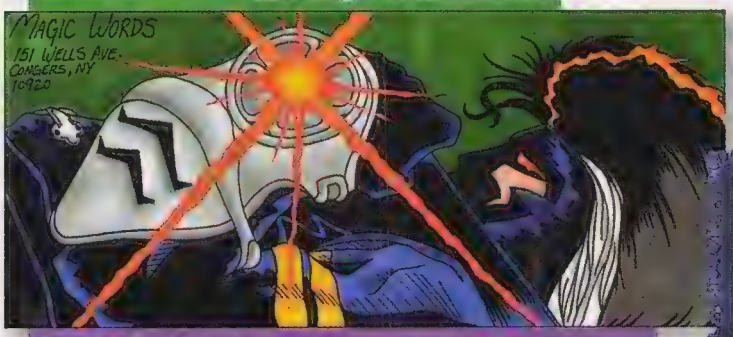


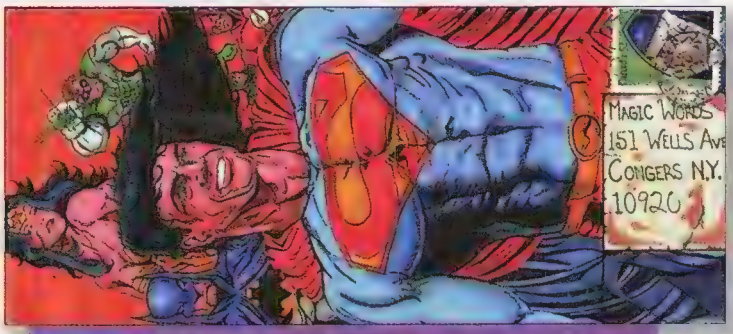
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive a copy of *Punisher* (vol. 2) #1 signed by Tom Lyle, a Toy Biz Marvel CD-ROM, a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins all that cool stuff, *plus* two extra Toy Biz Marvel CD-ROMs! (Thanks for the loot, Toy Biz!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address on the *back* of your envelope.

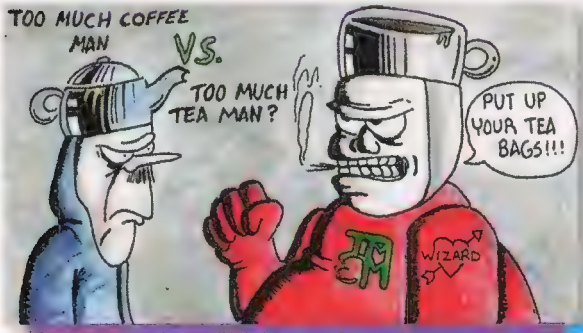
envelope of the month



ASH Mike Karsten



JUSTICE LEAGUE Derek Croney



BEVERAGE BATTLE Jose Delapaz Gresham, OR

VENGEANCE OF BONE Jason Weinberg

eaten two flavors of edible underwear, neither of which were chocolate-strawberry. Both that I've tried tasted kinda like Fruit Roll-Ups.

9) Easy. Just write the letters column for Wizard.

10) Not listening. You don't learn a damn thing when you're talking. You only learn when you listen.

Dear Wizardonians,

I recently came upon a strange discovery. It occurs to me that Spawn (also known as Al Simmons) has a twin brother! Who is this twin, you ask? It is none other than fitness guru Richard Simmons! It seemed unbelievable to me at first. But consider this:

From reading Spawn, we learn that ever since becoming Spawn, Al Simmons has been losing precious energy. In science, we learn that energy cannot be created or destroyed; it can merely change direction or change form. Where does Spawn's used energy go? Why, to Richard Simmons, who becomes more and more energetic as Spawn uses more energy! I fear for those near Richard when Spawn uses a lot of his energy at once. He may very well explode! Come to think of it, that might be kinda nice.

So there you have it. The real story. I'd like to hear what Mr. McFarlane thinks now that I've uncovered the secret of his best-selling comic book!

Greg DeSantis
Cranston, RI

Todd McFarlane could not be reached for comment. I think he was too busy sweatin' to the oldies.

He can sweat it out, but I'm gonna get out. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin has been drunk in 22 of the 50 United States. You're next, Rhode Island!

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TOM SNIEGOSKI
ANDY PARK

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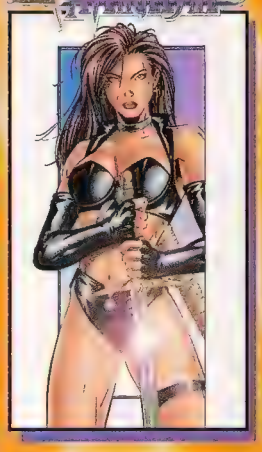

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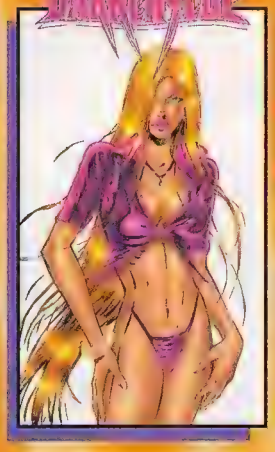

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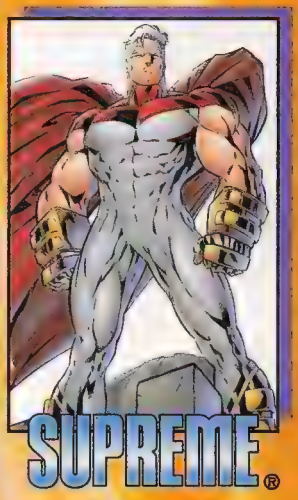

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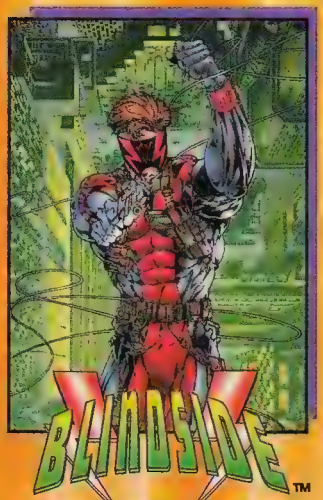

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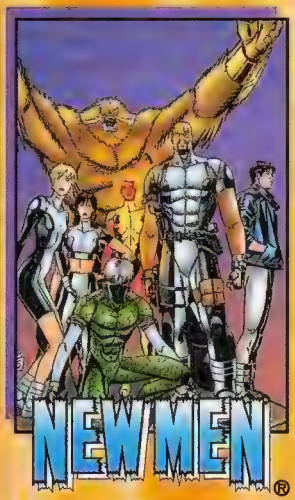

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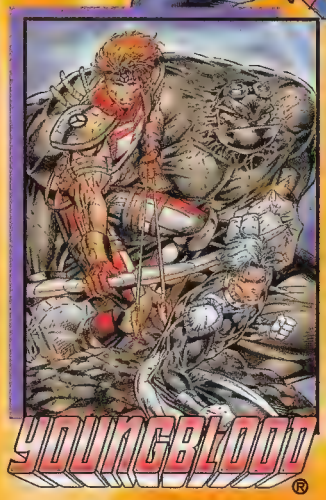

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MARVEL/DC to Meet Again With *All Access*

DC's Vertigo line expands with Gus: The Surly Scarecrow. *"Get the hell outta my cornfield, you rat bastard!" bellowed soulless abomination before soiling a crow.*

Krypto the Superdog hits hard times. "I need Alpo money and I'm willing to do damn near anything to get it," said flea-ridden former idol of millions.

Costumed comic fan explodes at local con. "You just can't eat that much cheese without expecting a downside, man," commented fecal-speckled spectator.

Look out, Amalgam II may be coming. But not if Access can help it.

There's a chance the characters in the Marvel/DC merged **Amalgam Universe** from the wildly popular ***Marvel versus DC*** mini-series may be coming back in October's ***All Access*** mini-series from DC, and that's just what Access is hoping to prevent.

All Access, written by **Ron Marz**, with pencils by **Jackson Guice**, will allow creators from DC and Marvel to once again mix and match the characters from the two different universes. "[*All Access*] will actually go further in-depth with specific characters, meetings and fights," DC Universe editor **Mike Carlin** said. In addition to published reports of Superman and Spider-Man teaming up to tackle Venom, Carlin said, "You'll see some **Batman/Wolverine** action, and some full-fledged **JLA/X-Men** stuff. If there was one criticism of the first series, it was that the big fights were so short."

The Amalgam Universe also caught the attention and imagination of fans. "Amalgam was really the big payoff for the die-hard comic fans," *All Access* Assistant Editor Chris Duffy said. "The battles were good for everybody, but most fans felt the Amalgam books were the most fun of the entire series."

Access' job in this mini-series is to prevent Amalgam from happening again. In all of comicdom, Access is unique not only in that he can exist in two different comic book universes, but that the character is jointly owned by Marvel and DC. "We own the 'Acc,' and Marvel owns the 'ess,' " laughed Duffy.

Access has been quite busy since we saw him last in *DC versus Marvel* #4. "This character lives in both universes," Carlin said. "He's like us—he likes both Marvel and DC, and can facilitate crossing over between the two universes. He's even got girlfriends in both universes. He's now the cosmic 'hall monitor.' He's got to make sure everyone is on the right 'floor.' He has the power to take people back and forth with him, but at what cost?"

"There's a threat that's actually something left over from one of the Amalgam books," Duffy said. "One of the characters from the Amalgam Universe has plans to bring back Amalgam, and Access has got to stop it from happening."

Carlin added a couple of teases as well. "**Dr. Strange** is definitely a key to this story," he said. "If Fate gets mixed up with him, that just may lead to some problems, because that was one of the keys to return to the Amalgam Universe left over from the original outing.

"The Amalgam books were even more fun for us to do than the initial crossover. If enough people want to see Amalgam return, I wouldn't be surprised if [Marvel editor] Mark Gruenwald, myself and the higher powers at Marvel and DC could find a way to negate Access' powers for a week or two, and allow Amalgam to happen again. We'd be foolish not to do it, since it was so much fun for us."

Duffy agreed: "The Amalgam Universe makes you wonder. If this universe exists, can we go back to it? Well, we didn't see the dead body of the Amalgam Universe, so..." ■ *Matthew Brady*

Marvel and DC meet again in *All Access*

ahead

LOEB TO WRITE CAPTAIN AMERICA!

CATWOMAN MEETS VAMPIRELLA!

ASH/AZRAEL/ BATMAN CROSSOVER!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Curse of Spawn to debut in September

Get ready for a new **Spawn** title this September.

Todd McFarlane will launch *Curse of Spawn*, an ongoing monthly title that, like DC's *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*, will feature different creative teams on every new story arc. The stories will not be "What If?"-based, but will reveal Spawn history and insight on what being a Spawn is all about.

"The simplest way to describe this new series is like a Vertigo-type Spawn book," said McFarlane. *Curse of Spawn*—which promises to be dark and filled with horror—focuses on the premise that Spawns have existed throughout time. The series will feature both previous and future holders of the Spawn mantle, though McFarlane added, "The curse can touch many people, so I might actually have one with Detective Sam Burke or Terry [Fitzgerald], peripheral edges of the curse and show how a Spawn's existence interacts with their own lives."

Alan McElroy, writer of the "Spawn" movie screenplay and much of the upcoming "Spawn" HBO animated series, will be writing the first four-issue story arc entitled "Spawn: Dark Future." The story is set 400 years in the future in a world where evil is triumphing over good. The denizens of Hell are walking the Earth. Into this darkened world, the new Spawn, Daniel Llanso, enters.

"It's a much darker story than the ongoing *Spawn* title," said McElroy. "It'll be a real uphill battle. The powers of light are really on the verge of being marched out of existence."

Dwayne Turner (*Sovereign Seven, Wolverine*) will pencil the first story and hopes to capture a darker feel for the book.

Will McFarlane himself take on a story arc in the new series? "There are a few characters I'd like to personally guide, at least on the writing end of it, and it just matters if I can find the time to pencil or ink," he said. "I don't see that my hand will be completely away from it. I like consistency, so if Alan and Dwayne want to stay on for a long run, I probably won't argue with them, but if they have other projects to go to, I'll just go about doing different story arcs with different kinds of teams on them." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Marvel/Fox Sign Exclusive Animation Deal

Marvel Comics and **Fox Children's Network** have signed a long-term production and distribution agreement which gives Fox exclusive rights to the Marvel Universe characters for all-new animated television series for the next seven years.

"It was extremely important to us to have an arrangement where we had access to properties, and that access be fairly exclusive," said Margaret Loesch, President of Fox Children's Network. "Because of certain movie deals and pre-existing deals, our exclusivity is broad, but it's not total."

Pre-existing animated Marvel shows remain unaffected by the new agreement, including the "**Incredible Hulk**" series debuting on UPN this fall.

Fox will produce a minimum of four new animated Marvel shows as stated in the deal, but it hopes to showcase and feature over 20 properties in the next seven years. **Captain America, Daredevil** and the **Silver Surfer** are the first few characters slated for their own series in the fall of 1997.

There is still discussion about the possibility of a live-action Marvel television series on Fox, though the recent agreement is between Marvel Comics and Fox Children's Network only, not Fox Broadcasting in its entirety.

"By the very nature of live-action," said Marvel Comics Group President Jerry Calabrese, "with the exception of maybe Thor, it's probably not going to be a Kid's Network kind of thing. It's going to be a prime time kind of thing like our recent 'Generation X.' And within those bounds, Fox [Children's Network] has the ability to do live action on that pool."

In addition, the agreement does not prohibit Fox from accepting properties from other comic book companies like "The Adventures of Batman and Robin."

No money exchanged hands between Marvel and Fox during the agreement. "The exclusivity was achieved by the scope of the deal and by the financial commitment that we're making to produce a certain number of properties," said Loesch. "And it is our intention and commitment to continue to build the Marvel franchise on television throughout the seven years and possibly beyond." ■ *MS*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

- **DC Comics** and **Jim Lee**'s WildStorm Productions are rumored to be co-producing a **Gen^{13}/Batman** one-shot (drawn by **J. Scott Campbell**) and a **JLA/WildC.A.T.s** crossover. An official announcement is expected soon.
- **Garth Ennis** was scheduled to write Top Cow's ***Ripclaw***, but he's bowed out to concentrate on the publisher's ***Darkness*** series. *Ripclaw* is now on hiatus, but will return with a new direction. (In the meantime, Ennis will write a **Witchblade/22 Brides** crossover book for '97.)
- **Generation X** gains a new mentor? Marvel is considering **Iron Fist**, as it wants to expand his role in the Marvel Universe after his two-issue mini-series in September.
- ***Marvels II*** is said to be in the painting stages. The sequel follows how the darker side of the Marvel Universe evolved, featuring **Punisher, Dracula** and **Werewolf by Night**.
- **James Robinson** has reportedly signed on to write a few issues of ***Ash*** in '97. He has also said that he's writing ***The Silver Age***, a sequel to his and **Paul Smith**'s acclaimed ***Golden Age*** mini-series from DC. **Howard Chaykin** is slated as artist.
- **Marvel** recently announced at the Chicago ComiCon that Ghost Rider is due for a facelift sometime in the future. Could this have anything to do with the title's rumored takeover by **Marc Silvestri**'s Top Cow Productions?
- Big name creators such as **Bart Sears, Keith Giffen, Ray Lago** and others have joined forces to an online-only comic imprint called Abbadabba on the World Wide Web. An expected launch is slated for August. More details pending.

Loeb Replaces Dixon on Captain America

Citing "creative differences," writer **Chuck Dixon** (*Robin*) has resigned from his assignment to write **Rob Liefeld**'s upcoming stint on ***Captain America*** and has been replaced by **Jeph Loeb** (*X-Man*, *Cable*, *X-Force*).

The announcement was made by Extreme Studios in late June as Dixon was contributing to the first issue of *Captain America*, scheduled to come out in September.

"Chuck handed in the first pages and we were very disappointed with the direction that his script took," said Liefeld. "It was not in line with what we wanted and we just agreed to part ways. Chuck's a great writer and a great guy, but we just weren't on the same page."

Dixon will be credited as a plot contributor on the first issue, according to Liefeld, for the four pages of the book he was involved with.

When the opportunity came to work with Loeb, Liefeld said he jumped at the chance.

"I sent the pages to Jeph and said, 'Take a look at the job and see if this is something you'd consider doing,' " recalled Liefeld. "Jeph called me and said, 'Let me tell you the story after seeing the first 50 pages.' And we were right on."

Liefeld pointed to "great dialogue" as

Jeph Loeb, new Cap writer

the attribute that drew him to Loeb, as well as their similar career paths, with Loeb following up on *X-Force* and *Cable*, books that Liefeld started on.

Liefeld also dismissed reports of deadline problems regarding the books.

"The first issue is done," said Liefeld. "We were supposed to do 40 pages but we did 50. And eight pages on the second are already done."

Loeb insisted he is comfortable with Liefeld and the time frame for the project.

"This is Rob's show," said Loeb. "I make my living in the movie business; I do comics because I love them. So when I'm asked why I'm doing this, I have to have a pretty damned good reason, and the reason is that Rob showed me the stuff and it's amazing. And I want to be a part of it.

"My feeling is that Rob is totally open to whatever I want to give him, but he has a very specific vision of what he's doing," Loeb continued. "I perceive this experience as Rob being the director, Captain America the star and I'm the screenwriter. My job as the screenwriter is to execute the director's vision as best I can."

And for all those Captain America naysayers, Liefeld has one thing to say:

"People who are waiting for a train wreck are going to be disappointed." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill & Matthew Senreich*

QUESADA Signs on for Ash/Azrael/Batman Team-Up

Joe Quesada has always been able to make a living playing with fire.

Now he's going to take two of his successful superheroes with flame-based powers and put them together, in the **Ash/Azrael/Batman** crossover, a one-shot set for December.

Quesada and Batman Editor Denny O'Neil introduced the flame-throwing Azrael in 1992's ***Batman: Sword of Azrael***, the best-selling mini-series that became a much sought-after collectible when it turned out that Azrael would play a pivotal role in the Batman saga. And Quesada and **Jimmy Palmiotti**'s *Ash*, starring their flame-controlling fireman/superhero, has made Event Comics one of the more successful self-publishers on the market today.

The crossover was Quesada's idea. "With our #0 issue out in June, revealing at least part of Ash's origin, and the new *Ash: The Fire Within* mini-series on schedule, Jimmy and I thought it was a perfect time to try and get more exposure for the character," he said. "Working with Denny and Archie [Goodwin, editor of the *Azrael* mini-series] was one of the great thrills of my life, so I called Archie first thing."

"Joe suggested a crossover with Batman, but then, he always suggests Batman," laughed Goodwin, "because he just loves to draw the character. But it seemed to me that, given Joe's role in creating both characters and the flame motif inherent in each, Azrael was the more natural candidate."

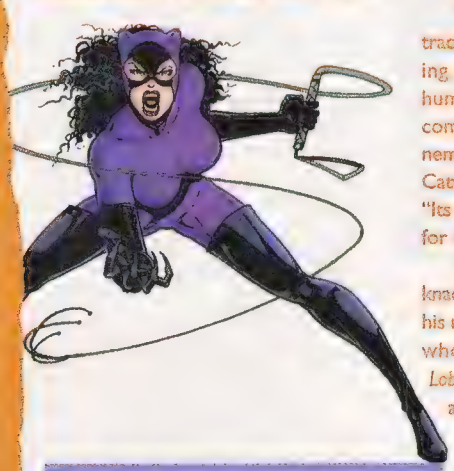
The crossover will, in Goodwin's words, "involve a villain who is, shall we say, pyromaniacally inclined so as to naturally draw our two heroes together." The story itself will take place in both New York City and Gotham City. "Denny pointed out to us that New York City is integral to Ash," Quesada said, "to the point where it becomes almost a character in the book, just as Gotham City does in the Batman titles. We wanted to take advantage of both settings." ■ *Jack Curlin*

DC Unveils Catwoman/Vampi, Lobo/Mask Crossovers

Crossovers figure heavily in DC's plans for later this year—highlighted by a team-up of Bad Girls, **Catwoman** and **Vampirella**, and offbeat characters, **Lobo** and the **Mask**.

In *Catwoman/Vampirella*, December will heat up when two of the baddest Bad Girls on the scene meet on the mean streets of Gotham City.

"This isn't going to be your run-of-the-mill, no-story, T & A book," said DC's editor of the project, Kevin Dooley: "We're talking about Catwoman and Vampirella here, the two original Bad Girls of comics."

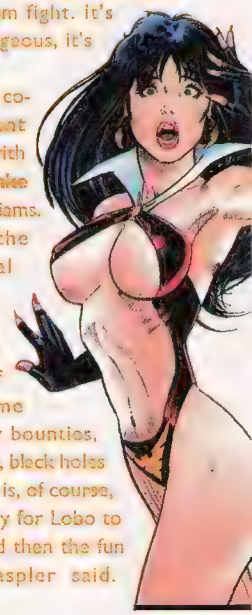


The story is written by former *Catwoman* scribe **Chuck Dixon**, with pencils by **Jim Balent** and inks by Ray McCarthy. "Chuck's really got some great ideas, and has this wonderful dialogue and characterization right from the beginning," said Harris Managing Editor David Bogart.

The fireworks start when Vampirella tracks Catwoman down in Gotham, thinking she has committed crimes against humanity. "Of course, Catwoman isn't committing these crimes—Vampirella's nemesis, Pantha, is behind it all, hence the Catwoman connection," Bogart explained. "Its really got a natural flow and is perfect for both characters."

The unstoppable bounty hunter with a knack for dark humor may have finally met his match when he meets up with the guy who can't be killed in the four-issue *Lobo/Mask* mini-series coming from DC and Dark Horse late this year.

"Lobo plays the straight guy to the Mask," said DC's Project Editor Dan Raspler. "What else can I say? The closest thing it compares to is a gigantic Bugs Bunny/Yosemite Sam fight. It's tremendous, it's gorgeous, it's hilarious stuff.



The mini-series is co-written by **Alan Grant** and **John Arcudi**, with pencils by **Doug Mahnke** and inks by Keith Williams.

The theme of the mini-series is total mayhem. Raspler revealed that readers can look forward to the destruction of New York City, time travel, billion-dollar bounties, intergalactic assassins, black holes and more. "The trick is, of course, figuring out some way for Lobo to put on the mask, and then the fun really begins," Raspler said. ■ *Matthew Brady*

We Looked It Up

Photo by Al Ortega

Mich•e•lin•ie, (Mick a line ee), David n. 1948-present; 1 comic book writer known for his stories in such titles as Marvel's *Web of Spider-Man* and *Amazing Spider-Man* 2 Currently the regular writer on DC's *Action Comics* 3 Name most commonly confused with the pudgy white guy made of tires, the Michelin Man

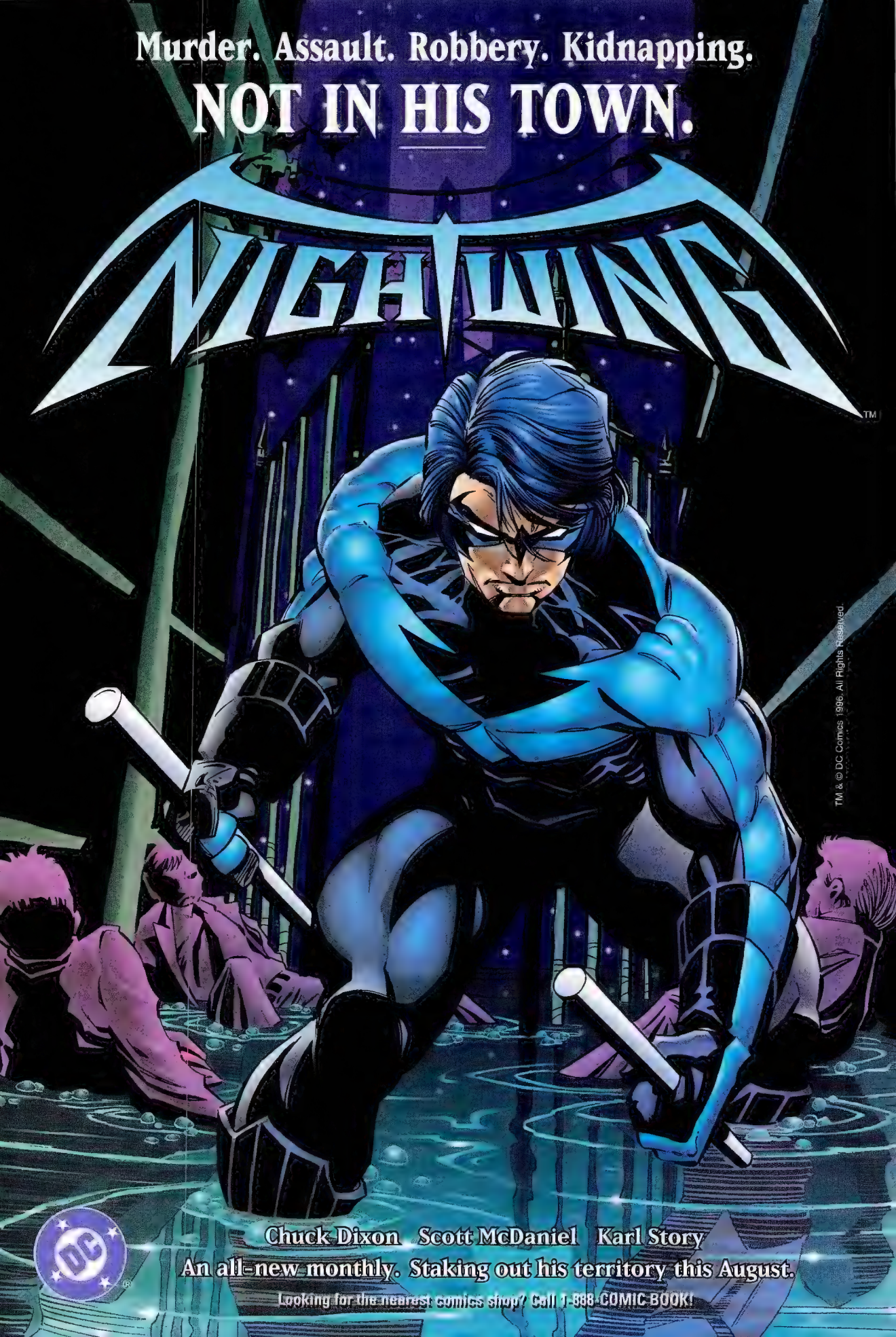
Zot! Creator Takes on Man of Steel

Scott McCloud, award-winning creator of ***Zot!*** and author of ***Understanding Comics***, will be the writer of DC's forthcoming ***Superman Adventures***, based on the animated series starring the Man of Steel, premiering on the WB network in September.

McCloud will pick up the scripting reins with *Superman Adventures #2*, following a first issue written by **Paul Dini**, one of the lead writers of the TV series and an award-winner himself for *Batman: Mad Love*. Art will be by **Rick Burchett** and **Terry Austin**, with character designs based on those used in the animated series. The comic book version will follow the continuity and background developed for the TV show and will not be directly connected to the mainline Superman stories appearing in *Superman, Action Comics, Adventures of Superman* and *Superman: The Man of Steel*.

Scott McCloud

McCloud, always a champion of self-publishing, said he decided to take on the Superman job for both personal and professional reasons. "I chose to take this offer, in part, because it gave me a source of income while I work on my massive graphic novel project for a year or so," he said. "I figure I can write a monthly title and still work on the novel. In addition, if I'm going to work for one of the majors, what better place to start than Superman? Especially a Superman where I can essentially work from the ground up, without having to worry about decades of continuity." ■ *PDO*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Silver Age Superman Artist Curt Swan Dies

Curt Swan, the artist who for 30 years defined the visuals for **Superman** was found dead at his home in Connecticut on June 16. He was 76.

Swan spent virtually his entire professional life at DC Comics, beginning in 1945. After a stint in the army, where he worked on the military newspaper *Stars & Stripes*, Swan found work with DC editor **Mort Weisinger**.

His earliest work for DC was on the *Boy Commandos*, followed by assignments on "Newsboy Legion," "Tommy Tomorrow" and *Gang Busters*. By the early '50s, he was the premier cover artist at DC, contributing not only to the books in Weisinger's stable, but also to Jack Schiff's Batman titles, all usually inked by Stan Kaye. By his own recollection, his first interior Superman work was in 1955, on a 3-D comic. After that, he gradually replaced Wayne Boring as the primary visual delineator of the Man of Steel. (He had already been working on both *Superboy* and *Jimmy Olsen*.)

In 1985's *50 Who Made DC Great*, Swan described the differences between his and Boring's versions of Kal-El: "Boring's Superman was heroically idealistic, and we wanted to make him more human. We wanted people to relate to him better, so we gave him personality."

"His pencils were gorgeous—very soft, but very clear, very clean," said **John Byrne**, who wrote *The Earth Stealers*, a 1988 Superman graphic novel penciled by Swan. "I think that was the strongest thing about Curt's work—it was believable. He drew a Superman you could legitimately expect to see walking down the street."

In addition to Superman, Swan added the "Legion of Super-Heroes" feature in *Adventure Comics* to his workload, becoming the regular penciler on that series from 1966 to 1968.

In 1985, after 30 years as the prime illustrator of Superman—a record unsurpassed by any other comics artist—Swan went into semi-retirement. After that time, he contributed occasionally to the Superman titles, including a run on a Sunday-newspaper-style strip in the weekly run of *Action Comics* in 1986. **Roger Stern**, who wrote that run, commented, "It was amazing to get the pages in and see them. He'd been drawing the character for 30 years, but every panel seemed fresh and new. The man's talent never slacked off. It was still impeccable draftsmanship and wonderful storytelling—real people with real emotions."

Mike Carlin, DC executive editor and until recently editor of the Superman line, not only praised Swan's work but had good news for his fans. "He was one of the greats—not just in his art but in his dealings with people. I always felt honored not just to work with him, but to know him. And you haven't seen the last of Swan's Superman—there's unpublished work by Curt waiting to be scheduled." ■ *PDO*

Shi Between Heaven & Earth

"By the end of ***Shi: The Way of the Warrior*** in August, everything in the Crusade Universe will be turned upside down," creator **Billy Tucci** assured us, as *Way of the Warrior* leads into the early '97 release of the four-issue ***Shi: Heaven and Earth***.

But which Shi will it be? Since the shocking conclusion of the recent ***Shi vs. Tomoe*** one-shot, readers believe Shi to be dead as Tomoe has taken up the reins as the new Shi. But even Tomoe's story is far from over, promised Tucci.

"I conceived *Shi* as a trilogy of mini-series," he said, "each one complete in itself but which, taken together, form one grand epic. The story will go on, in a new series, *Shi: Heaven & Earth*."

That story, originally conceived to be set entirely in the 17th century, now will be told on two levels, with events occurring during a great conflict in 1637-38 China being reflected in a story unfolding in modern day New York City. "The story will obviously feature a character called Shi, but it might not necessarily be the Shi everyone expects."

Shi: Heaven & Earth centers around what is known as the Shimbara Revolt, during which 30,000 Christians, persecuted after the Franciscan Friar missionaries were kicked out of China, were holed up in an ancient castle, under siege by an army of 120,000 samurai. The Shi of that era, protégé of the greatest swordsman who ever lived, eventually finds herself on the opposite side from her mentor.

"This story goes right to the very heart of Shi," said Tucci, "and shows us where the character came from. We're going to explore Japanese culture even more than we have to date and tie everything together. Ana [Ishikawa, a.k.a. Shi], remember, is half Christian and a product of two cultures, someone who turned from hunter into hunted."

While he may be telling this second installment in a somewhat different fashion than originally intended, Tucci revealed that the overall tale has been carefully planned from the start. "Some readers think that the *Tomoe* mini-series was an idea that developed along the way," he added, "but it was always part of our thinking. It was important for readers to get to know Tomoe, to see her as a complete person with faults and emotions and dreams..."

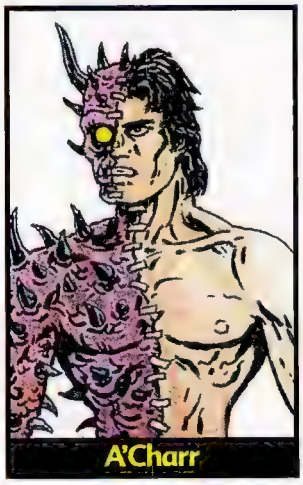
All of which must mean...ah, but that would be giving things away in advance, and Billy Tucci doesn't do that.

Following the series' climax in *Shi: The Way of the Warrior* #12, Shi will next appear in October's ***Shi: Choices***, a 48-page choose-your-own-adventure book that allows readers to create, plot and pace their own stories. Also in October, ***Manga Shi: The Series*** will kick off, following July's *Manga Shi: Shiseiji* one-shot. ■ *Jack Curtin*

Wizard "Villain" Winner Featured in Rune Mini-Series

The winning entry in *Wizard*'s "Rune: Create a Villain" contest (back in *Wizard* #52) will battle **Malibu**'s vampiric antagonist in a series of back-up stories in the forthcoming ***Rune: Hearts of Darkness*** mini-series shipping in September.

Cary Getchell of East Lyme, Conn., created the winning villain, A'Charr, whom Malibu editor **Mark Paniccia** described as "Li'l Abner gone evil." A'Charr will confront Rune in back-up stories in the three-issue series, with script from James Felder (*Speed Demon*) and art from the Pander Brothers (*Grendel*).


A'Charr

The lead stories in each issue will be by **Doug Moench** (*Batman*), with art from **Kyle Hotz** (*Carnage*) and **Tim Bradstreet** (*Crow: City of Angels*).

The winners in the "Create a Villain" contest received all sorts of Rune-related prizes including a Rune stand-up, a copy of *Rune* #0, a copy of the limited-edition silver-foil *Rune* #1 and a copy of *Rune* #2 autographed by Kyle Hotz.

Rune: Hearts of Darkness will include flip covers featuring the A'Charr back-up drawn by the Panders and a *Wizard* logo heralding the results of the contest. ■ *PDO*

NEWS BITES

Sprouse Signs on for *NewMen* relaunch

Former ***Star Wars*** penciler **Chris Sprouse** makes his debut as regular artist on Extreme Studios' *NewMen* in August, as the book relaunches after an eight-month hiatus.

NewMen will be relaunched with an all-new logo, artist and direction, but not a new numbering.

"By bringing it back now," said **Eric Stephenson**, the old and new writer of *NewMen*, "with Chris Sprouse as the new regular artist, and [at] the beginning of a new storyline, we get a chance to roll the book out again and give it a bit of fanfare, without starting over with a new #1."

Sprouse, perhaps best known for his penciling work on Dark Horse's adaptation of *Star Wars: Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, "was paramount to bringing the book back," Stephenson continued. "Part of the reason why our layoff was eight months long as opposed to, say, six, was that Chris had to finish up working on other projects." Veteran Extreme inker **Al Gordon** finishes off the art line-up.

"I'm looking forward to doing a straight superhero book," said Sprouse, who had also previously worked on DC's *Legionnaires*. ■ *Ruth Morrison*

CBLDF Takes on Lansdale-Truman Defamation Case

The **Comic Book Legal Defense Fund** has decided to support **Joe Lansdale**, **Timothy Truman** and **Sam Glanzman** in their defense against a civil complaint brought by musicians Johnny Winter and Edgar Winter in connection with DC Comics' series ***Jonah Hex—Riders of the Worm and Such***.

The Winters' suit alleges defamation, invasion of privacy and related claims on two characters, the Autumn brothers, created for the series by Lansdale and Truman. Attorneys Gail Migdal Title and Jeffrey Abrams of the Los Angeles office of Katten Muchin Zavis & Weitzman have taken on the defense of Lansdale, Truman and Glanzman.

"It was our intent to use the Jonah Hex comic book series as a vehicle for satire and parody of musical genres, Texas music in particular, as well as old radio shows, movie serials and the like," said Lansdale. "We feel within our rights to parody music, stage personas, album personas, lyrics and public figures."

In other news from the CBLDF, the Florida obscenity conviction of controversial cartoonist **Michael Diana** has been sustained on appeal. Diana's convictions on charges of "distribution of obscenity" were based on his mail-order comic book *Boiled Angel*. Reversed on appeal was the conviction for "advertising obscene material," which the Appellate Court found was erroneous because the advertised comic, *Boiled Angel Ate*, was not yet in existence and therefore could not be determined to be obscene.

More recently, George's Sport Card Shop in Syracuse, N.Y., has been given a citation for violating a general ordinance which prohibits an "adult entertainment business" within 1,000 feet of any residential area, family dwelling or city park. George's Sport Card Shop carries sport cards, comics books and videos (some of which contain adult material) and has 30 days to comply with the ordinance before the city seeks to impose any penalties. The CBLDF is consulting with an attorney to determine the First Amendment issues involved with the citation. ■ *PDO*

Marvel Launches Online Service

Marvel Comics and **Spider-Man** have spun onto the web.

Marvel officially unveiled its exclusive domain on **America Online** on July 4. Highlighting this site is an inaugural digital comic book featuring Spider-Man which promises to define new meaning to the traditional comic book page.

"You're not just going to see what the Marvel Universe is about, you're going to be immersed in it," said Ben Raab, editorial manager of Online Entertainment at Marvel Interactive.

The cyber comic allows readers to navigate through weekly eight-page stories, containing sound effects and new art. Certain images, when clicked on, provide the reader with information on spotlighted characters, creating a more interactive feel. The Spider-Man story is the first ever comic book created *exclusively* for America Online. **Scott Lobdell** is writing the first tale with **Mark Bagley** penciling.

"The online stories are not going to be reprints or old origin stories—they're all new," said Suzanne Gaffney, Cyber Comics editor. Marvel plans to release four online comics within the next year, with Wolverine slated to be next. The third will feature a fan-selected hero, while the fourth will introduce a new exclusive online character that's still under development.

To locate Marvel Online, users can simply type in the keyword Marvel. ■ *MS*

BYTE THIS!

"Wizard World" 's clubs on America Online are growing faster than ever expected. The most recent count shows more than 39 active clubs serving every interest from the X-Men to Top Cow to Manga/Anime. Clubs are located in the message boards. Join one today!

Happy first birthday wishes are in order for the X-Men fan club Asteroid X, "Wizard World" 's most active club. The one-year-old club's spirited chats and message boards are a haven for mutant-obsessed fans. **Asteroid X** was our first official online club. Club members even don the names of their favorite characters for X-Men Sim, an online roleplaying game on "Wizard World."

X-Men expert and *Marvel Visions* writer Benny Powell hosts the popular X-Men Trivia Hour every Tuesday. The online contest "Who Is Onslaught?" was a hot topic for several weeks. Fans placed their guesses on the "Wizard World" Message Board and *everyone* who answered correctly won a prize.

The day Top Cow announced its departure from Image, "Wizard World" hosted Editor **David Wohl** in a chat room to discuss the news. Wohl spilled the beans about the not-so-sweet parting. You can download the complete transcript from "Wizard World" 's Picture Gallery in the folder "Chat Transcripts."

To keep up with "Wizard World" 's online happenings and late-breaking comic news, join our weekly e-mail list. To get on the list, send an e-mail called "Include Me!" to WizEmail@aol.com.

To hook up to "Wizard World" on America Online, call 800-754-4400. They'll send you free software and 10 hours free online. Keyword: Wizard. Also, check out *Wizard*'s web page at http://www.wizardpress.com.

"Wizard World" 's Revised Chat Schedules for the Special Events Room

MONDAY

- **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**
  Time: 7-8 p.m. (EST) August 5, 12, 19, 26 & September 9, 16, 23, 30
- **Manga/Anime**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST) August 5, 12, 19, 26 & September 9, 16, 23, 30
- **WildStorm**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST) August 5, 19 & September 9, 23
- **Top Cow**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST) August 12, 26 & September 16, 30

TUESDAY

- **Wizard Unplugged with *Wizard*'s Editors**
  Time: 6:30-7:30 p.m. (EST) August 6, 13, 20, 27 & September 3, 10, 17, 24
  Featuring: *Wizard* Editors Online: Pat McCallum, Andrew Kardon and Brian Cunningham
- **X-Men Trivia**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST) August 6, 13, 20, 27 & September 3, 10, 17, 24
  Featuring: X-Pert Benny Powell

WEDNESDAY

- **Asteroid X Club (X-Men)**
  Time: 6-7 p.m. (EST) August 7, 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 11, 18, 25
- **Trivia Chat**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST) August 7, 21 & September 4, 18
  Featuring: *Wizard* Freelancer: Matt Brady
- **Avengers Assemble**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST) August 7, 14, 21, 28 & September 4, 11, 18, 25

THURSDAY

- **InQuest Chat**
  Time: 7-8 p.m. (EST) August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 & September 5, 12, 19, 26
  Featuring: *InQuest* Freelancer: Rick Moscatello
- **Breaking In**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST) August 8, 22, 29 & September 12, 26
  Featuring: David Campiti
- **Manga/Anime**
  Time: 12-1 a.m. (EST) August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 & September 5, 12, 19, 26

FRIDAY

- **LOOP** (Legion of OverPower, Marvel CCG)
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST) August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 & September 6, 13, 20, 27

SATURDAY

- **Fantastic Four Club**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST) August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 & September 7, 14, 21, 28

SUNDAY

- **Sandman100 Comic Book Chat**
  Time: 8-10 p.m. (EST) August 4, 11, 18, 25 & September 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
  Featuring: Don Lisk

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

company updates

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

September marks the release of the *Guys Party Pack*, which will reprint *Cerebus* #201-#204.

AA² ENTERTAINMENT

Scheduled for a July release is *Agony Acres #2*, which features an inked cover by George Pérez, the regular cover inker. September's *Agony Acres #3* will feature a pin-up by Jimmy Palmiotti.

Agony Acres

AC COMICS

It's the countdown to *Femforce #100*! August sees the release of a *Femforce Special Edition*—featuring a flip-book format that centers on Nightveil and Colt—which will replace the regular *Femforce* book this month.

ARCHIE COMICS

To celebrate the launching of the new ABC sitcom starring Sabrina the Teenage Witch in September, Archie is re-releasing three Sabrina specials that month: *Sabrina's Halloween Spooktacular #1* and *Sabrina's Holiday Spectaculars #2* and *#3*. Then look for an all-new Sabrina comic in October.

BIG ENTERTAINMENT

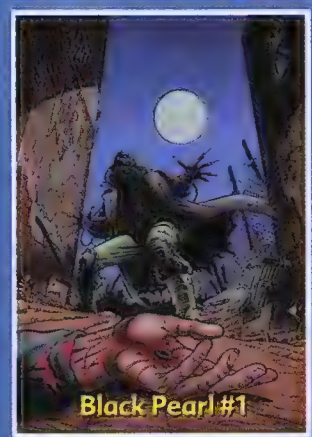
Neil Gaiman's Phage: Shadow Death #6 pits Orlando Holmes against the Teknophage himself on his way to disarm the Phage's Psi-Bomb. The September book is written by Bryan Talbot (*The Tale of One Bad Rat*) and concludes the limited series.

BROADWAY COMICS

In an effort to focus attention on the stars of its books and avoid market confusion, Broadway Comics has announced title changes for several of its offerings. *City Perilous* will become *Knights on Broadway*, *Shadow State* has been renamed *Till Death Do Us Part*, *Powers That Be* will be changed to *Star Seed*, while *Fatale* will remain unchanged. Congrats to Broadway for landing the Gem Award from Diamond Comic Distributors for "Best New Publisher of the Year."

DARK HORSE COMICS

Actor Mark Hamill will be co-writing *The Black Pearl* with screenplay writer Eric Johnson. This full-color, five-issue mini-series sees regular guy Luther Drake quickly elevated to hero status, thanks to a hungry press. Look for it in September. The Gunsmith Cats return this August with a seven-issue mini-series called *Gunsmith Cats: The Return of Gray*. Dark Horse's new imprint Blanc Noir features creator-owned comics by the likes of Adam Hughes, Jason Pearson, Cully Hamner, Joe Phillips, Brian Stelfreeze and Karl Story. The imprint's first title is Pearson's *Body Bags*, the tale of a father/daughter team of bounty hunters. The first issue ships in August. *Barry Windsor-Smith: Storyteller* is an ongoing monthly series by the popular artist, beginning in October. August's *Classic Star Wars: Devilworlds* is


Black Pearl #1

a two-issue series featuring the work of Alan Moore and Alan Davis, previously only available in the U.K.... Look for a Grifter/Mask crossover this September, written by Steven Seagle with art by Luciano Lima.

DC COMICS

September sees a paperback reprinting the six DC-published Amalgam books in *The Amalgam Age of Comics: The DC Collection*....September's *Final Night* weekly mini-series sees the final fate of Hal Jordan, which leads into October's *Green Lantern #81*....*Batman: Haunted Knight* is a trade paperback shipping in September reprinting all three *Legends of the Dark Knight* Halloween Specials....Check out *Essential Vertigo: Swamp Thing*, a series which reprints in black and white the classic Alan Moore/Steve Bissette/John Totleben issues, beginning with *Saga of the Swamp Thing #21* in September....In December, artist Phil Jimenez jumps on board *The Invisibles* Vol. 2 #1 with writer Grant Morrison....Congrats to Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, as *Preacher* was selected by *Entertainment Weekly* as the "Cool Comic" for their annual "Cool Issue."

HARRIS COMICS

Cyberfrog returns this September in a two-issue mini-series entitled *Reservoir Frog*. Issue #1 sports an Erik Larsen cover....Vampirella dies this September in *Vampirella: Death & Destruction #3*, featuring a fully painted cover by Joe Jusko....Also in September is *Vampirella: Sad Wings of Destiny*, a Special recounting the most pivotal moments in Vampi's life courtesy of Gary Frank, Amanda Conner, Jimmy Palmiotti, Joe Jusko and more!

IMAGE COMICS

• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT

Here's a sneak peek at the cover for *A Distant Soil #16*, slated for September. It has Bast trying to seduce Avatar Rieken to her side.

• TODD MCFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

October sees the release of TMP's first (of hopefully many) fully painted comic starring Spawn. It's written by Mike Grell with art by Mike Pryor (painter of some of the "Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire" posters for Lucasfilm).

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

August sees the beginning of a four-issue, weekly mini-series crossing over the entire Image Universe for the first time! *Shattered Image*, written by Kurt Busiek

with various artists, sees an unexplained phenomenon threaten reality itself, causing Image's greatest heroes (Spawn, Savage Dragon, Witchblade, Youngblood, etc.) to join forces and save their world....*Gen(3)*'s first spinoff title, *DV8*, ships in August. Written by Warren Ellis with art by Humberto Ramos, issue #1 ships with eight variant covers....October's *Backlash #25* promises 50 pages of story for only $3.95....The *Killer Instinct* trade paperback collects all six parts of the WildC.A.T.s/Cyberforce crossover. It ships in October for $16.95.

KEVLAR STUDIOS

After releasing *Horseman #1* under the Crusade imprint Hank Kwon has chosen the self-publishing route. Sparking the new imprint is a special zero issue that kicks off a six-issue bimonthly *Horseman* series beginning this summer.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

September sees the release of Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell #10*. This is the final issue of this painstakingly researched series looking into the twisted mind of Jack the Ripper.

LIGHTNING COMICS

Creed: Cranial Disorder #1 launches a new mini-series, as a friend of Mark's gets entangled in a devious plot to take over reality. The full-color September issue is $3.00.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

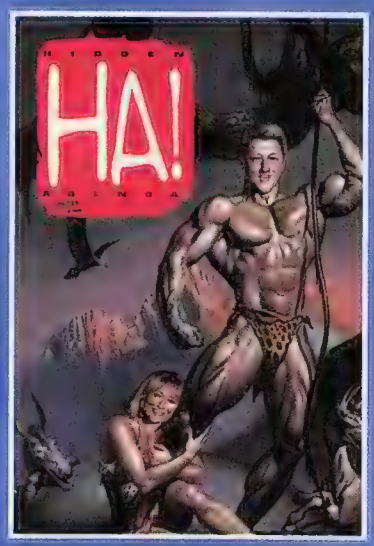
September's *Razor* Vol. 2 #1 takes the antiheroine into the All-Ages world (that's no nudity or profanity, kids), with a wraparound chromium cover....The October comic *Embrace* stars Columbia recording artist Carmen Electra as a nightclub singer/dancer who's also a vampire.

MILESTONE MEDIA

Check out the guest appearance of the popular R&B group the Lost Boyz in August's *Static #40*, marking the first of many appearances by hip-hop artists in Milestone titles.

MILLENNIUM PUBLICATIONS

An Adam Hughes cover graces the debut issue of *Chassis*, which will be on the stands in late June.



PENTHOUSE COMIX

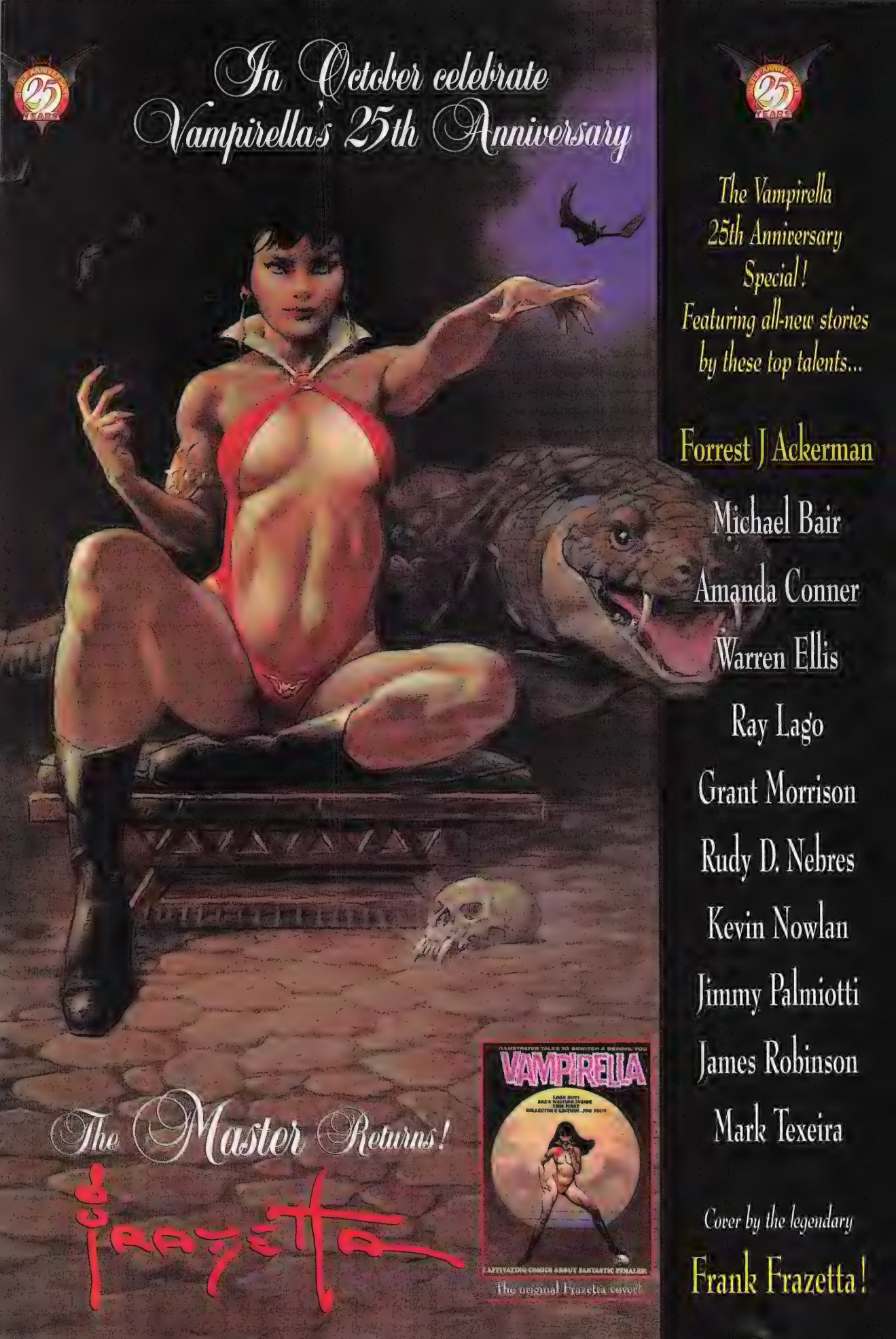
The full-color humor magazine *HA!* (which stands for Hidden Agenda) takes off in September with a full-length spoof on the U.S. Presidential elections. This flip book's Democratic side features a Bill Clinton cover by Boris Vallejo, while its Republican side offers a Bob Dole cover by Spitting Image (straight from the British political humor TV show). The 80-pager is $4.95.

SAMSON COMICS

Coming this August, *Vixen 9* will feature a cover by Greg Capullo (*Spawn*).

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT

Sirius adds the cyber-underground manga-esque title *Reality Check* to its line in September, with a new color mini-series. The series follows a teen named Colin whose cat becomes human by means of virtual reality. The title was formerly published by Tovicat Comics....Kevin J. Taylor's gothic sci-fi character returns in *Fung: Testament*, a four-issue series in September.

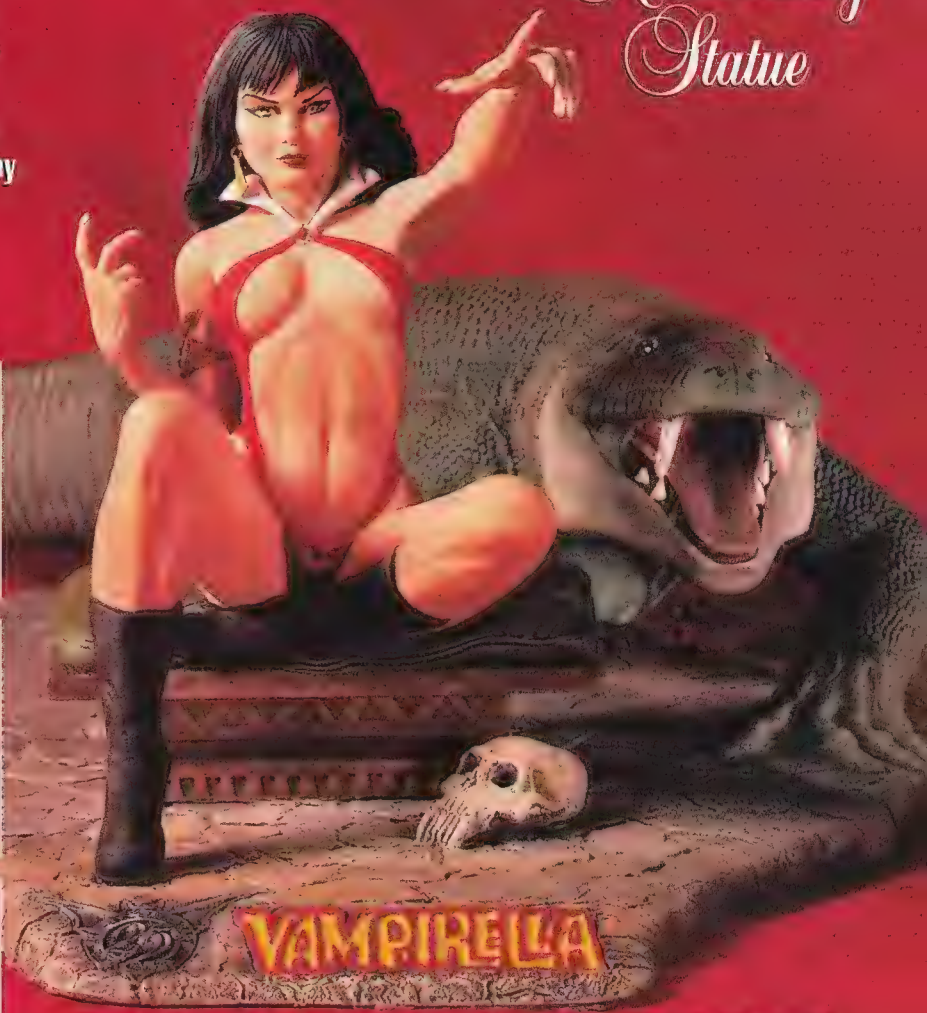

In October celebrate
Vampirella's 25th Anniversary
The Vampirella
25th Anniversary
Special!
Featuring all-new stories
by these top talents...
Forrest J Ackerman
Michael Bair
Amanda Conner
Warren Ellis
Ray Lago
Grant Morrison
Rudy D. Nebres
Kevin Nowlan
Jimmy Palmiotti
James Robinson
Mark Texeira
Cover by the legendary
Frank Frazetta!
The Master Returns!
Frazetta
VAMPIRELLA
The original Frazetta cover!

VAMPIRELLA®

25th Anniversary Statue

"This sculpture of Frazetta's work is my dream come true assignment. He's the first person to truly influence me to become an artist. This is my ultimate tribute."

– Sean Nagle, Sculptor
(ASH, Zen, Hellboy, Boba Fett, Chewbacca and Ben Kenobi statues)



Based on the new Frank Frazetta painting of Vampi, this 1/8th scale fully painted cold cast statue will be strictly limited to 5,000 copies that will be specially packaged with a numbered seal.

VAMPIRELLA STRIKES

Silver Anniversary Edition

She loves and she kills. In issue seven, a seductive vampiress makes her way across the country leaving a trail of bodies behind. Vampirella must embark on a dangerous game of cat and mouse, as the life of an innocent young woman hangs in the balance. This issue will also feature "Call Me Panther!" in which is the first meeting between Vampirella and Pantha.

Written by IAN EDGINTON Art by RUDY D. NEBRES

Painted cover by DAVID (Kabuki) MACK, flip cover art by RUDY D. NEBRES

Silver Flip Cover

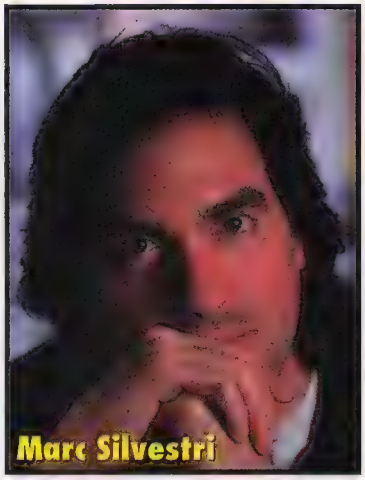
HARRIS COMICS

Wizard Special Report

WHAT NOW FOR IMAGE?

Marc Silvestri has left **Image**. But, more importantly, where does this leave Image? Status quo, if you speak to anyone associated with Image—the third-largest comics publisher. The company line is such: "Marc was talented, and we'll miss him but it will be business as usual." But is it as simple as that? Silvestri takes with him four Top 100 books—***Witchblade***, ***Cyberforce***, ***Ripclaw*** and ***Weapon Zero***—and a strong fan-following. And ***The Darkness***, a Silvestri/**Garth Ennis** project slated for October is sure to burn up the charts.

So where does Silvestri's departure leave Image? Will there be any ripple effects? Can we expect future roster moves—more departures or an infusion of new talent? *Wizard* examines all the possible scenarios.


Marc Silvestri

1) Will other Image co-owners follow Silvestri's lead and depart?

Silvestri decided to depart the company he helped found in 1992. Officially, Silvestri stated he "needed some new challenges." Privately, he admitted to a feud with another co-owner, citing "creative differences" as a reason for leaving. Make no mistake, there is extremely intense competition among the co-owners. They may be unified under one company but they're also competing against each other in a brutal marketplace. And not just for comics sales. There's animation, toys and live-action movie deals. Big bucks are on the line. So it's only natural that feuds may erupt. Image Publisher **Larry Marder** downplays the possibility of any friction between owners. "Walking away from Image doesn't fulfill the goals of the owners," he said. "There were no creative differences with anyone at Image because they're all owners of their own companies. I felt Top Cow really felt it was time to move and they did. Period."

But why don't other co-owners choose to leave? The reasons are varied. Together, this group helped build the third-largest comics company. With this comes a certain amount of pride and ensuing loyalty. That's on an emotional level. There are more tangible reasons. Despite individual name recognition, the Image "i" is still recognizable, much more so than any individual company's icon. In addition, there are financial perks to being grouped that come into play when negotiating distribution and advertising deals. "I think we've worked very hard to receive some of the privileges based on size and market share," added Marder. "The others do understand we worked very hard to get where we're at. To walk away at this point would be perplexing."

2) Will Image change?

While Silvestri's breakaway was sudden, it wasn't unexpected. Image was—and always will be—dominated by the big three: **Jim Lee**, **Rob Liefeld** and **Todd McFarlane**. And despite significant improvement in both book quality and sales, Silvestri's Top Cow studio was always going to be overshadowed by the big three—at least as long as he remained at Image. Silvestri's decision to leave may have even served to unify the Image core group further. "I intend to always be a part of Image," said McFarlane. Liefeld and Lee have also publicly professed their allegiance, at the same time they have forged a partnership deal to return to Marvel with the "Heroes Reborn" project. "I'm not going anywhere," said Liefeld, who led the Marvel exodus five years ago. "I have a tremendous amount of pride in Image and what it stands for—and our Marvel deal doesn't change that at all."

Image co-owner **Erik Larsen** has a more practical reason for staying.

"The Image Universe is still a fun home for my characters—and having access to so many more strong characters that they can interact with is still extremely appealing," said Larsen. More importantly, the remaining members of Image believe they must stay together. Separate, ***Spawn*** or ***WildC.A.T.s*** would probably sell as

CHAIN REACTION

Fellow and Former Image Creators Respond to Top Cow's Departure

TODD McFARLANE (IMAGE CO-FOUNDER)

"I feel the same way about it as I did about Rob and Jim doing their Marvel deal. It's a business decision [Marc] made. These aren't deals I would make for myself, but I don't run the same kind of studio operation that they run. If nothing else, it encourages me not to become a studio guy, that's for sure."

ROB LIEFELD (IMAGE CO-FOUNDER)

"For whatever reason, Marc never seemed content with Image. I barely had any communication with him, but it was clear he was building up to this. He had ambitions beyond Image, and I wish him a lot of success. It will be interesting to see how they do on their own and how they adapt to the ever-changing marketplace out there."

ERIK LARSEN (IMAGE CO-FOUNDER)

"Given the relationship we have with distributors and printers, Marc's move makes little economic sense. Given the cooperative nature of Image and the respect he was given by his partners, it seems unlikely that he left because of any personality clash. It seems he thought that he could draw more attention to his books if they weren't under the Image umbrella. I wish him nothing but good things. He's one hell of a creative force, and I hate to see him go."

JIM VALENTINO (IMAGE CO-FOUNDER)

"It wasn't a big shock, but it was kind of surprising. But people can leave as soon they're ready to go. Everybody has these ideas about what Image means, and they're all wrong. All it means is that we've acceded to each other the right to be an individual. We respect each other enough to let everyone do whatever they want."

JEFF SMITH (IMAGE MEMBER)

"I don't really know Marc and I don't have much of an opinion on it at all. He's got to do what he's got to do. I have no insights as to why it happened or anything. I've talked casually with a couple of the guys, and I don't get the feeling from them that Image itself is crumbling. As far as I'm concerned, no, it doesn't mean anything to me at all, but I'm not one of the owners. So, if Rob and Todd and Erik Larsen all want to split up, it really doesn't affect me at all. I don't think it would even slow me down."

DALE KEOWN (FORMER IMAGE MEMBER)

"In the beginning, I imagine everybody thought Image would be different than it actually turned out to be—it sort of morphed into this other creature. Everything changes, I guess. I'm not surprised that he left. I think that for Marc it was the right choice, as it was for me. Out of all the guys, he was the most independent. He's the guy who clearly does his own thing. Jim's like that too, but I would say that Marc is more so. [Marc] likes to have control over everything, like I do, and like Jim does. But who knows? Maybe everybody will split away and it'll be a bunch of smaller companies."

Marc Silvestri photo by Craig Malenhouse. Todd McFarlane and Erik Larsen photo by Al Ortega.

many copies, though the workload would definitely increase as each company would be forced to handle the business aspects of publishing. Together, Image is a force to be reckoned with.

Dale Keown, who left Image to form Full Bleed Studios, found his own departure to be an eye-opening experience in the rigors of self-publishing. "When you're thrust into it like I have been for the last three or four months, you really learn a lot. It's a crash course," said the creator of *Pitt*.

3) Will Image replace Silvestri?

Does Image need some new blood—a hot-shot young talent to create buzz? Does, or more importantly, *should* Image consider replacing Silvestri?

Such a move would add new properties to fill the void left by Top Cow's departure. So why not bring in a **Joe Madureira** or a **Billy Tucci** (see sidebar) to add new ingredients to the Image stew? Liefeld feels that would undermine the company's solidarity. "The bottom line is Image doesn't need to replace anyone. The Image 'i' is bigger than any one individual," he said. Similarly, Marder believes there is no gain in opening the company doors to newcomers. "The core group is still together—Todd, Jim and Rob," he said. "We don't need to invite additional partners in order to run our business." Creators like **Jeff Smith**, **Kurt Busiek** and **Colleen Doran** have all benefited from joining Image, if only to secure a safe haven to publish. Conversely, with the exception of Busiek's *Astro City*, Image's publication of *Bone* and *A Distant Soil* has illustrated a commitment to comic book material beyond the standard superhero fare which the company was founded and flourished upon. Image could do worse than inviting *Shi* or *Ash* or even *Lady Death* to set up house alongside *Gen*[13] and *Spawn*.

The Bottom Line

While the ultimate future of Image can only unfold with time, Silvestri's departure has at least a few of the members reaffirming their allegiances—no matter what might occur. "To me, Image means freedom of choice, and that hasn't changed in the years since we started up," said Liefeld. "I contributed to the growth of Image. Todd and I talked briefly [after Top Cow's announcement] and we'll go down with the Image 'i.' " ■ *Scott Beatty & Joe Yanarella* W

Filling Out the Ranks

Wizard Asks Some of Comics Hottest Creators to Imagine Themselves as the Next Member of Image

JOE MADUREIRA (UNCANNY X-MEN)

"I'm telling you, if I wasn't on the X-Men, I would probably be working at Image. *Uncanny X-Men* is something I wouldn't leave for anything, but I think at some point I would like to do my own thing—and I would love for it to look good. I'd probably go to Image because they do have the highest production value of any company in the industry. There'd be a lot to gain, but you'd have to ask me after I get fired from the X-Men."

BRIAN PULIDO (CHAOS! COMICS/LADY DEATH)

"I would never join Image in a million years. First, Chaos! Comics is where darkness dwells, and I think Image is where spandex dwells. I also wouldn't want to be associated with several creators over there who I think genuinely don't have one inventive bone in their bodies. We're doing too well—why would we want to join up? We kicked their asses this month."

JOE QUESADA (EVENT COMICS/ASH)

"Number one, I'd be flattered to be asked. Number two, we at Event have made a conscious decision, way before Crusade and some of these other guys, to remain non-exclusive. The fact that Image is exclusive right now to one distributor would be something that I would have to weigh very heavily. It's a tough call to make without knowing the inner workings of Image. But it would be ludicrous for me to say, 'We wouldn't even think about it or even consider it.' "

DAN JURGENS (SUPERMAN/TEEN TITANS)

"As long as I don't have to have a studio. [*Laughed*] I don't want to have a studio full of 85 guys who I've got to find enough work for to keep busy. To me, what anyone is looking for is the right type of arena to express themselves creatively. And if that exists, if it's a re-tooled Image, if it's at an existing company with a separate label, whatever it might be, I think that's what all of us are looking for."

BILLY TUCCI (CRUSADE/SHI)

"I have enough headaches with just my little company. I don't really know how I'd handle having to work for such a big company like Image. It would be kind of cool to be asked, but who knows if they would?"

ADAM KUBERT (WOLVERINE)

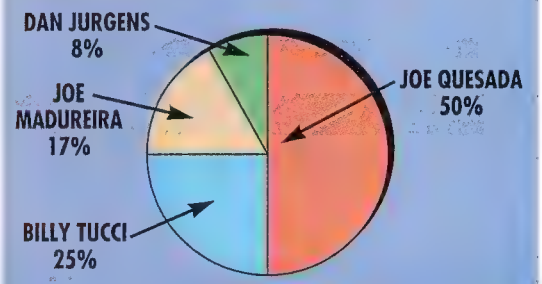
"I'd be very flattered, period. It's an established company with a bunch of reputable guys, as far as I'm concerned—*and* they put out a high-quality product. I would consider all serious offers."

Joe Quesada photo by J. Schuyler

Question of the Month

Since news of Marc Silvestri's departure from Image Comics is on everybody's lips, *Wizard* decided to find out just what our fans think of the whole thing. So we used our "Wizard World" forum on America Online to find out the following:

Assuming that Image wants to replace Marc Silvestri with another creator, who would you like to see fill Silvestri's shoes: **Joe Quesada, Billy Tucci, Brian Pulido, Joe Madureira, Dan Jurgens** or **Adam Kubert**?



While the majority of fans felt Quesada's style would fit perfectly with the Image gang, Tucci's fans brought up some interesting points, with one fan posting, "Billy Tucci is the best writer on that list, and nothing makes a comic like a good story."

We also asked fans their opinions on the following Image-related questions:

- Will Marc Silvestri's leaving Image influence your buying any Top Cow comics in the future: No **(92%)** or Yes **(8%)**?
- How much does the Image logo (rather than a name like Todd McFarlane or a studio like Extreme) affect your decision to buy an Image comic: not at all **(67%)**, somewhat **(25%)** or very much **(8%)**?

Whether for good or bad, the majority of fans don't seem to be specifically looking for that Image logo anymore before buying a book. As someone posted, "I outgrew company loyalty a long time ago. Considering the amount of books published by even some of the smaller companies nowadays, being a zombie could result in an empty bank account." ■ *Sorrell Booke*

X-CUSE ME?

The 10 most outrageous mutant makeovers ...and what comes next

By the *Wizard* staff

"Truth is stranger than fiction."

That's how the saying goes, which means that whoever coined that line didn't read comics. Especially X-Men comics. In the escapist world where fanboys lose themselves every week, time travel is safer than taking the bus, gorgeous aliens use Earth as a hangout and all you need to gain superpowers is a quick dip in some toxic waste. Comic book fiction has our own twisted reality beat by a mile.

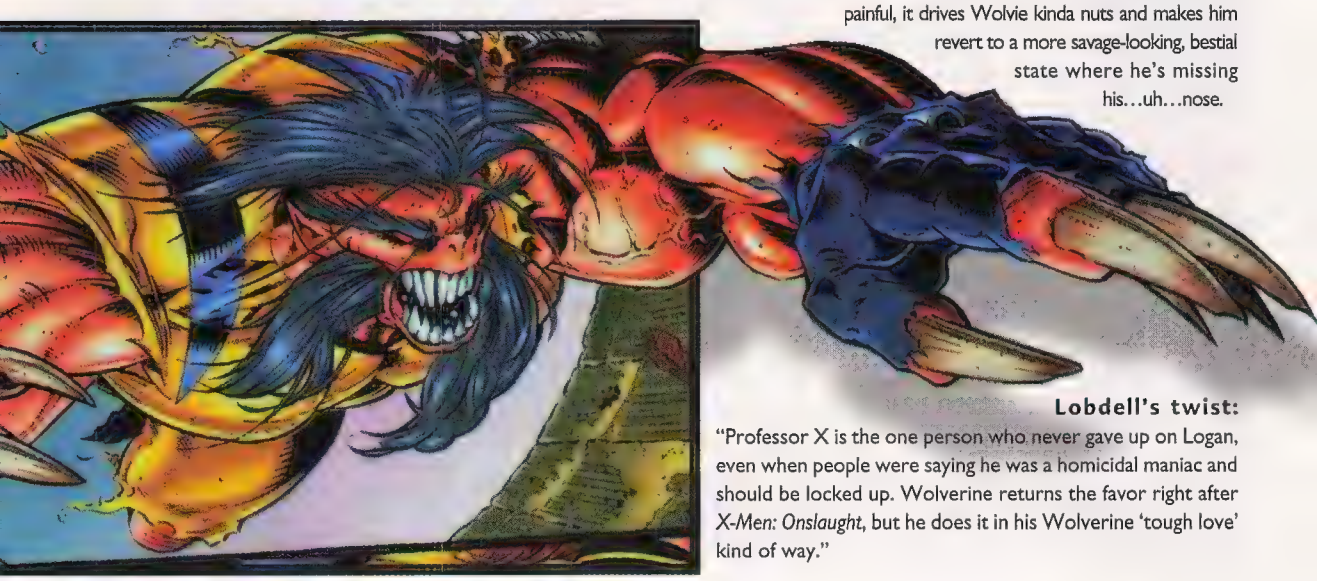
And the X-Men are the reigning kings of the comic hill in this department. Judge for yourself as we introduce you to 10 of the more outlandish X-characters, the strange turns life has handed them and how X-Men writer Scott Lobdell plans on evolving our merry mutants even further.

WOLVERINE

The Deal: Born with enhanced senses and an amazingly quick healing factor, next to nothing is known about Logan's early life, though he did (we think) join some secret government agency (we're not sure which) as a special agent (or something). Shortly afterwards, he was abducted (maybe) and had adamantium bonded to his bones. After escaping the lab, he was (presumably) found by Canadian James Hudson and went to work as a bestial, loose cannon-type field agent for the Canadian government before hooking up with the X-Men.

Plot twist: After years of battling to keep his bestial side in check, Logan becomes a much more civilized member of society, proving to be one of the X-Men's most valuable members—until Magneto gets irked with him and rips all the metal (and his car keys) from his body.

The "Then how does he smell?" plot twist: In an effort to create a new horseman for Apocalypse, the villain Genesis attempts to bond adamantium back into Wolverine's body in a procedure so horrifically painful, it drives Wolvie kinda nuts and makes him revert to a more savage-looking, bestial state where he's missing his...uh...nose.



Lobdell's twist: "Professor X is the one person who never gave up on Logan, even when people were saying he was a homicidal maniac and should be locked up. Wolverine returns the favor right after *X-Men: Onslaught*, but he does it in his Wolverine 'tough love' kind of way."

PROFESSOR X

The Deal: Born with unmatched mutant telepathic powers, Charles Xavier took to traveling the world and came across Amahl Farouk, a telepath who was using his powers for evil. After defeating that dirty mutie (and later having his legs crushed by the alien Lucifer), Chuck was convinced that someone had to protect the world from evil (and work towards peace between humans and mutantkind), so he formed the X-Men.

Plot twist: Years after faking his own death to catch an invading alien force unawares, Chuck is infected by a different alien race called the Brood, mutates into a giant evil bug, is defeated by the X-Men and has a new body cloned for him where his legs work...until he loses the use of his legs a second time while battling his son possessed by the astral form of that Farouk clown.

The "That's one pissed bald guy" plot twist: Uh-oh...Professor X has gone all loony. Turns out, all the suppressed anger and frustration during his constant attempt for world peace have manifested themselves—possibly along with Magneto's submerged emotions that exist in Chuck's head since he mind-wiped Maggie—into a separate entity called Onslaught, a fairly unstoppable creature responsible for altering the entire fabric of reality in the Marvel Universe.

Lobdell's twist: "Professor X will wheel off into the sunset under the protective custody of Val Cooper in an effort to ensure that the horror that was Onslaught never happens again."

MAGNETO

The Deal: When his family was killed by fearful prejudice, Eric Lehnsher lashed out with his mutant control of magnetism. Dubbing himself Magneto, he assembled his "Brotherhood of Evil Mutants" and declared a murderous war on humanity.

Plot twist: After being reduced to an infant and then regrown to a younger version of himself than he was before he was reduced to...wait, let's try explaining that again. Here goes: After returning to adulthood after being reduced to an infant, Magneto's genetic makeup is mucked with, so he has more of a "good guy" outlook on life, becomes the leader of the X-Men, but then figures out his "essence" was screwed with, gets really pissed, becomes a bad guy again, fights the X-Men and gets turned into a vegetable by Professor X. (That's the brain-dead kind, not the peas-and-carrots kind—not that this scenario would be out of the question, what with the way these plot twists are going.)

The "You again?" plot twist: Awakening from catatonia a year after Professor X popped his brain, an amnesiac Magneto wanders into an orphanage in Mexico, befriends the li'l kiddies, tries to make some time with a nun, slaughters a local mob ring, splits and later hooks up with Rogue as she prepares to return to the X-Men.

Lobdell's twist: "We don't call him Magneto anymore. We call him Joseph. He'll actually get into a no-powers-rule fist fight with Gambit over Rogue, who as it turns out, couldn't be less interested in being the object of the fist fight between Joseph and Gambit."

PSYLOCKE

The Deal: Born with the mutant ability of telepathy, soft-spoken, mild-mannered, English lass Betsy Braddock used her powers to help her brother, Captain Britain, battle evil in merry ol' England. It did cost her her eyesight in the process though.

Plot twist: After traveling to America and receiving bionic "spy" eyes from the other-dimensional Rush Limbaugh-ish Mojo, Betsy joins the X-Men following the X-Men's devastating battle with the Marauders during the "Mutant Massacre."

The "Umm...weren't you Caucasian?" plot twist: After going through the Siege Perilous, a magical device that gives beings a second chance at life, sweet li'l Betsy now battles evil mutants as a slutty, Asian, ninja assassin who's partial to thongs and breaking jaws. Betsy returns from the Siege Perilous and finds herself in Japan where she meets the Mandarin and Matsuo Tsurayaba. These two guys place Betsy's mind inside the body of a ninja assassin chick named Kwannon and vice versa, because they were looking for the perfect assassin with psi-abilities. Later on, the Kwannon mind/Betsy body killed herself before the Legacy virus could do her in. Don't you just love it when things tie up nice and neat?

Lobdell's twist: "No special plans for Psylocke, outside of her reacting to Archangel's changes. But she won't be featured in any big plotlines."

JEAN GREY

The Deal: Jean Grey's parents sent the young teen off to Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters to help her cope with her mutant powers, where she took the codename Marvel Girl. After being hit on repeatedly by her all-male teammates (most notably rich pretty-boy Warren Worthington and the under-sexed Scott "Slim" Summers), Jean falls for—and gets all mushy with—Scott.

Plot twist: Trapped on a space shuttle hurtling back to Earth, Jean locks the rest of the X-Men in a protected cargo hold and pilots the ship back to Earth, exposing herself to lethal doses of radiation…that grant her nigh-omnipotent power. Now calling herself the Phoenix, Jean gets some new hobbies like slowly losing her mind, eating stars and genocide. Then she kills herself on the moon.

The "I'm sorry, what happened?" plot twist: As it turns out, when Jean Grey was piloting that ship back to Earth, she was visited by the Phoenix-entity who placed her in a cocoon at the bottom of Jamaica Bay while it took her place on the X-Men and did all that nasty stuff. The *real* Jean Grey was revived, is now alive and well and, as of this writing, still waiting to be made into an action figure.

Lobdell's twist: Lobdell hinted that while he was still waiting for editorial approval, Modok (y'know, the big-headed guy in the floating chair) may kick off a chain of events that would result in the severing of the psionic bond between Cyclops and Jean Grey, with Cyclops treading awfully close to the cliff of complete madness. "Complications are going to arise in Jean's family life, and that's all I can say."

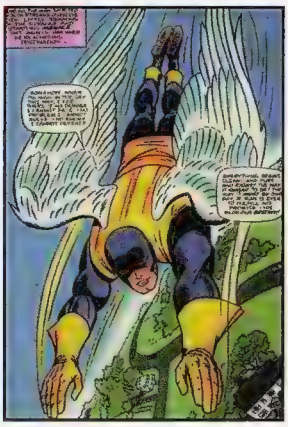
CABLE

The Deal: X-Man Scott Summers fell head-over-heels for Madelyne Pryor, a drop-dead look-alike for his dead ex-girlfriend Jean Grey. The two got married and had a child, whom they named Nathan Scott Summers.

Plot twist: Whoops, turns out that Maddie is actually an evil clone of Jean Grey! She changes her name to the Goblin Queen and attempts to sacrifice li'l Nate to shatter the boundaries between Earth and a hellish other dimension. Good thing that child-sacrifice is against the Comics Code and li'l Nate is rescued while Maddie gets her butt whupped.

The "You'll have to read this twice" plot twist: Now being raised by his dad and his dead clone-mom's template, Nate contracts a lethal techno-organic virus, and the only way to save him is to ship him off to the future. There he's cloned, with the original raised to be the time-traveling, freedom-fighter Cable and the other raised to be the time-traveling, good guy-killer Stryfe.

Lobdell's twist: "What we'll be dealing in the post-'Onslaught' *Cable* is a man whose body is completely out of control. He's lost control of the techno virus that calls his body home. We're talking about really, really wonking him out in terms of his look. The techno virus story will take Cable to the brink of death, and I'll just leave it at that."



ARCHANGEL

The Deal: Warren Worthington III was born a normal healthy kid-millionaire, but that all changed when he hit puberty and giant, angelic-like wings sprouted from his back. Growing to accept and ultimately love the freedom his wings gave him, Warren hooked up with the X-Men and helped battle injustice as the high-flying, full-of-life, happy-go-lucky Angel.

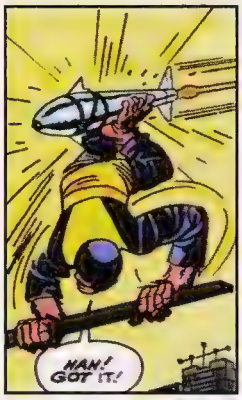
Plot twist: Suicidal after his wings were amputated as a result of battling the mutant-killing Marauders, the Angel takes his own life in a rigged airplane explosion.

The "Maybe Shirley MacLaine's right" plot twist: His body saved by Apocalypse in the plane wreckage, Warren has his skin dyed blue, gets a set of living, metallic, razor-tipped wings and becomes Death, the fourth horseman of Apocalypse. After slapping around his ex-partners for a couple of issues, Warren realizes the error of his ways and rejoins his mutant pals as the fairly unstable Archangel.

Lobdell's twist: "Warren's been spending too much time tending to Psylocke and her experience within the Crimson Dawn that he's failed to notice what's been happening with his own body due to his injuries from last year's *Sabretooth Special*. These changes will surprise him and the rest of the X-Men in *Uncanny X-Men* #338. It's not so much the end result of Apocalypse's playing with his DNA, but rather the manifestation of the continuous changes that have been going on in him since Apocalypse toyed with him."

BEAST

The Deal: Somewhat shafted in the cool mutant-power category, Hank McCoy was born with oversized hands and feet (keep your mind out of the gutter, people) and incredible agility, had a picture-perfect family environment and led a normal life until joining the X-Men, where he used his mutant power (and genius-level IQ) to combat evil mutants. Oddly enough, he wasn't killed in any of these outings.



Plot twist: Between his stints as an X-Man, Hank began developing a mutagenic formula that mucked with a creature's genetic makeup. During a break-in, Hank displayed his intelligence by downing his untested serum instead of letting it fall into the wrong hands, triggering his body to be covered with gray fur (which later turned blue), his strength to increase and his teeth to grow into beastlike fangs.

The "Only in comics" plot twist: Escaping his own hellish world, an evil alternate-dimension gray Beast enters our dimension, dyes his fur blue, captures "our" Beast, walls him up in an abandoned warehouse and takes his place in the X-Men.

Lobdell's twist: "Hank will reevaluate his life after having spent so much time as the prisoner of the Black Beast, and re-prioritize what's important to him. He'll come to the realization that he won't cure the Legacy virus single-handedly, and really concentrate on his life outside the mansion."

ICEMAN

The Deal: Born with the mutant ability to create anything out of ice, as well as to make himself look fairly ridiculous by covering his body in snow, Bobby Drake was one of the youngest original X-Men, hiding his insecurities behind a wisecracking demeanor.

Plot twist: Nothing too wacky here. Bobby eventually learns to hone his powers a little more, taking on a sleeker, ice-body type appearance, but is still a "Hey, I'm nothing but a background character at best!" superhero.

The "Hey, he doesn't suck anymore!" plot twist: When the telepathic White Queen is murdered, her consciousness survives and sets up shop in Bobby's noggin. Before returning to her own body, the White Queen unleashes Bobby's full potential, enabling him to tap his abilities of shapeshifting, target-temperature control and mass/strength enhancement, as evidenced by his chunkier body. Still somewhat whiny, Iceman is now a much more powerful (read: useful) member of the X-Men.

Lobdell's twist: "Bobby and [Cannonball] will go undercover in Graydon Creed's presidential campaign, and we'll see more tensions develop between Bobby and his father as a result. Bobby's father will end up having a long talk with Hank McCoy's father about what it means to have a child who's a mutant."

RACHEL SUMMERS

The Deal: The daughter of an alternate-reality Scott Summers and Jean Grey, Rachel lived during the "Days of Futures Past" future timeline, where America was under the martial law of the murderous Sentinels. With mutantkind on the verge of extinction, she helped send Kate Pryde's consciousness into her younger self in the present in a futile attempt to alter this hellish future.

Plot twist: Rachel herself escapes her future reality, journeys to the present-day Marvel Universe and hooks up with the X-Men. Shortly thereafter, she, as the alternate-future-timeline daughter of the Phoenix entity posing as Jean Grey, fulfills her destiny by assuming the role as the new Phoenix, quits the team and helps found the England-based superteam Excalibur.

The "Now my head really hurts" plot twist: With her teammate Captain Britain lost in time, Phoenix bridges the time-space continuum and brings the good captain to the here and now. In exchange, Phoenix is thrown into the distant future where she founds the Askani order, a clan of warriors sworn to defeat the tyrannical global-rule of the mutant Apocalypse.

Lobdell's twist: "No plans at all." W

The Wizard *staff now knows the true definition of "convoluted." (Additional reporting by Matthew Brady, who now knows the true definition of "enema.")*

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE...

Your head hurt yet?

If you think that X-Men stuff was pretty far-out, wait and see what else Marvel's got cookin' for the rest of the mighty mutantverse...

X-Men "Professor X's departure—in light of the events of 'Onslaught'—will change the dynamics of the team," X-Men scribe Scott Lobdell says. "The stories that are coming up really concentrate on the characters themselves and what has come from the direct results of 'Onslaught.' "

Cannonball Expect the former X-Force leader, and current X-Man, to return to X-Force later this year. But is it for keeps? Writer Jeph Loeb ain't talking.

Shatterstar Shatty's saga in *X-Force* will come to a head this fall. Assumed to be the son of Longshot and Dazzler, writer Jeph Loeb hints that he may not be that at all. Shatterstar was recently shown to have a criminal record in New York City under another name. It seems that the Gamesmaster has been playing with his head all along as shown in the latest issues of *X-Force*.

X-Man "He's moving to New York," *X-Man* writer Terry Kavanagh says. "He'll be on a journey of discovery, and will learn more about humanity and this new world he's come to."

Quicksilver "Quicksilver will be hanging around the X-mansion for a while, and actually sleep on Scott and Jean's couch," Lobdell says. "He'll be trying to come to terms with what has happened to his wife [in the aftermath of 'Onslaught,'] and also trying to deal with the fact that his father is now old enough to be his son."

Howard the Duck Um, yeah—Howard the Duck. Okay, he ain't no mutant (so to speak), but he does tackle those Generation X kids. Writer Lobdell guarantees that the knock-down, drag-out fight between Chamber and Howard will wreak devastation and mayhem rarely seen this side of a Jackie Chan flick. MB

WIZARD

NOW PLAYING

"GHOST IN THE SHELL"

Wizard critiques the most expensive Japanese-animation project of all time

BY THE *WIZARD* STAFF

IT'S BIG.

The anime invasion of America has reached a boiling point. Not only are Japanese animated movies being imported to a wider audience in the U.S. on video, they're now also setting the silver screen ablaze in your local theaters.

Leading the pack is "Ghost in the Shell," the crown jewel in the crown of creator Masamune Shirow. With anime hits "Appleseed" and "Dominion" already tucked in his belt, fan-anticipation for "Ghost" was over-the-top electric.

Set in the year 2029, the plot revolves around a cyborg detective named Major Motoko Kusanagi and her quest to capture a self-conscious computer program known as the Puppet Master. Fighting her way through a web of technological intrigue and espionage, her hunt will bring her face-to-face with a creature that demands an answer: What constitutes "life"?

Sounds neat, but was it good? Popcorn in hand, the *Wizard* staff sat through a showing of "Ghost" to see if it lived up to the hype.

THUMBS UP

The Good: "Aside from the incredible animation, the strife of the Puppet Master—an artificial life-form arguing about the definition of life with his human creators—offered an interesting, thought-provoking conflict that's unlike anything you'd find in American animation."

The Bad: "Most of the story in the movie is just a set-up of the environment where they want to introduce the Puppet Master to you, and when they finally introduce him—revealing the point of the movie to you—it races to the ending. I would have appreciated a lot less mood and a lot more conflict."

Final word: "The 'Blade Runner'-esque environment was pulled off well, especially with the heavy addition of the Internet theme that 'Blade Runner' lacked—or didn't foresee. That, along with the other intriguing elements of the film, make it worth watching."

—Doug Goldstein, Production Director

THUMBS DOWN

The Good: "Unlike a lot of anime I've seen, this one had a plot that made you stop and think about the questions asked."

The Bad: "While the plot was great, the story wandered, bringing in too many unnecessary elements."

The Ugly: "While I never felt bored during the movie, I was often confused with what I had just seen on the screen, and when it was over I was left with a feeling of 'That's *it*?' "

Final word: "This flick suffers from the same crap that plagues too many of today's comics: lack of a strong editorial guidance—in this case, a director. While the plot hidden within the movie was excellent, and there was a handful of memorable moments, the movie consisted of scenes strung together for no apparent reason. It's like 'Jurassic Park' to the Nth degree…pretty to look at with some neat ideas, but unfulfilling."

—Pat McCallum, Editor-in-Chief

THUMBS UP

The Good: "Some of the dialogue between the non-human characters was excellent. Made you wonder at times who the real villains of the story were. Really made you think."

The Bad: "Too much indecipherable nonsense mucking up the story. The plot, while intriguing, was tough to follow."

The Ugly: "After sitting through the 90 minutes of this movie, I expected the ending to answer some questions, not ask more unanswered ones."

Final word: "While confusing, the plot behind the story was excellent, with scenes in the movie touching upon deep, soul-searching questions. That, coupled with astounding animation, makes me recommend this to comic and animation fans alike."

—Andrew Kardon, Copy Editor

THUMBS DOWN

The Good: "The future technology was great. Aside from the computer/Internet stuff, the uzi-briefcases and massive spider-tank looked awesome, sounded incredible and seemed like they could really exist."

The Bad: "This movie was dubbed 'the most expensive and technologically advanced anime film of all time,' and while it showed it with intricate backgrounds, the main characters weren't as lavishly animated. They seemed almost ugly in their beautifully rendered cartoon world."

The Ugly: "This movie lacked a comprehensible plot. I'm sure it had a plot, but only until the last 15 minutes or so did I figure some of it out. Plus, the movie was so fast-paced that it was extremely hard to follow. Call me a stumblebum, but I kinda like to watch movies I can follow."

Final word: "All flash and no substance."

—Brian Cunningham, Editor

THUMBS UP

The Good: "The cinematography was great. It made me feel like I was watching a live-action film."

The Bad: "While the animation was great, impossibly detailed background scenes dragged, as animators obviously wanted to show off their handiwork."

The Ugly: "Too many unanswered questions in the movie. While they hint at answering some, others are ignored completely."

Final word: "I've always been a big Japanimation fan, but even though the 'new wave' of anime is technically superior to the older offerings, I still find the stuff from the '60s and '70s more entertaining. But on top of all the negatives, it was still a fun movie to just zone out and watch."

—Bob Marshall, Price Guide Editor

THUMBS DOWN

The Good: "Tremendous animation. The attention to detail was astounding—from faces reflected off of windshields to the layers upon layers of backgrounds and foregrounds moving at different speeds—this movie just looks incredible."

The Bad: "Too much over-the-top cyber-talk. What appeared to be important scenes of dialogue lost me as if they were speaking a foreign language."

The Ugly: "The story unfolded very unclearly—it jumped from point to point without bringing the viewer along with it."

Final word: "'Ghost' is only worth your while if you watch anime strictly for the animation, because that's all it offers."

—Arlene So, Designer

The Wizard *staffers were also upset that at no time during "Ghost in the Shell" did someone yell "Tetsuoooooo!" and then explode.*

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WIZARD'S '96

GOTHAM CITY

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

(FIRST EDITION)

BUSINESS CENTERS

ART & CULTURE

VACATION SPOTS

BY SCOTT BEATTY

"A sanctuary! A stronghold! A fortress!"

That's what Judge Solomon Zebediah Wayne proclaimed about Gotham City in 1876, and he would be right. Wayne was the initiator of Gotham's famous architecture—the city's main attraction. Gotham's intense skyline truly evokes the word "skyscraper," with over 40 buildings towering over 600 feet in height—more than any other city in the world. Early 20th century industrialist Alexander Byrne captures Gotham's presence the best: "For all the shadows cast upon the city by its towering skyscrapers, it's still the brightest spot on any map and is only place in the world I would want to live in."

Founded in the early 18th century in the American Northeast by Swedish mercenaries, the settlement that would become Gotham City was eventually raided and taken over by British troops during the American Revolutionary War, becoming a pivotal location in the fight for independence. In time, Gotham Village became a major trading center, serving as the primary Eastern nexus for goods shipped to Europe and beyond. While the nearby southern port of Bludhaven established itself on the region's modest whaling trade, Gotham grew predominately through shipping, eventually capitalizing on the booming coal and steel trade of the United States before 1900. The growth of New York City and other centers of commerce soon eclipsed Gotham in this enterprise, but even today, Gotham still owes much of its livelihood to rail and sea trade.

Gotham City's unique modern design was initiated by post-Civil War Judge Solomon Zebediah Wayne, who commissioned the young architect Cyrus Pinkney to erect the first of many "Gotham-style" buildings in the then-fledgling city. Wayne convinced the Gotham Property Holders Association that this was the way of the city's future, and thus began the building of the current Gotham.

With its often windowless towers and gargoyle-guarded parapets, the city indeed became one of the Eastern seaboard's most imposing sites. Often imitated, the "Pinkney" style set the standard for much of Gotham, prompting even world-renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright to label the city "Jotunheim," after the fabled "realm of the giants" in Norse myth.

But despite its forbidding exterior, Gotham is the home of a diverse and hard-working populace, all striving to achieve the "manifest destiny" the city flourished upon. Gotham's culture itself abounds in diversity as much as any Metropolis or Big Apple. The fortress Solomon Wayne imagined stands at the forefront of our collective imagination.

GOTHAM CITY: Home of some of the finest architecture and cultural sites in the nation

FACTS ABOUT GOTHAM CITY

POPULATION (1996)

Metro Area 17,079,000

City 6,935,124

- 34 million airport arrivals per year
- 45 million rail commuters per year
- 24 million overnight visitors per year
- 5.2 million foreign visitors per year
- 1.8 million convention delegates per year

GEOGRAPHY

Size of Gotham is 295 square miles

Distance from New York City: 2 hrs. drive (average)

Distance from Metropolis: 2 hrs. drive (average)

NOTABLE BUILDINGS

	Date	Height	
Butler Museum of Modern Art	1907	292 ft.	20 floors
Bank of Gotham	1912	736 ft.	51 floors
Gotham City Hall	1915	551 ft.	37 floors
Gotham Stock Exchange	1919	785 ft.	58 floors
Sprang Building	1923	910 ft.	67 floors
Gotham State Building	1931	1,249 ft.	100 floors
Wayne Tower	1939	1,061 ft.	78 floors
Kane Center	1952	1,208 ft.	89 floors
Gotham Twin Towers	1970	1,350 ft.	108 floors

CULTURE FACTS:

29 musical/theatrical venues

90 museums and 230 art galleries

- Butler Museum of Modern Art
- Gotham Art Institute
- Gotham Museum of Natural History

14,000 eating establishments

88 newspapers

- *Gotham Gazette* (Pulitzer-winning daily)
- *Gotham Globe* (tabloid)

102 magazines

80 book publishers

11 TV stations

- WGOT (featuring Gotham's leading talk show, "Midnight Ramblings with Mitzi Manners")

98 radio stations

- WGNS-AM (all-news format)
- WBAH-FM ("Top 40" format)

83 universities and colleges

- Gotham University
- Gotham Institute of Technology

17 city parks

- Robinson Park
- Stroll Lane ("pocket" park in Midtown)

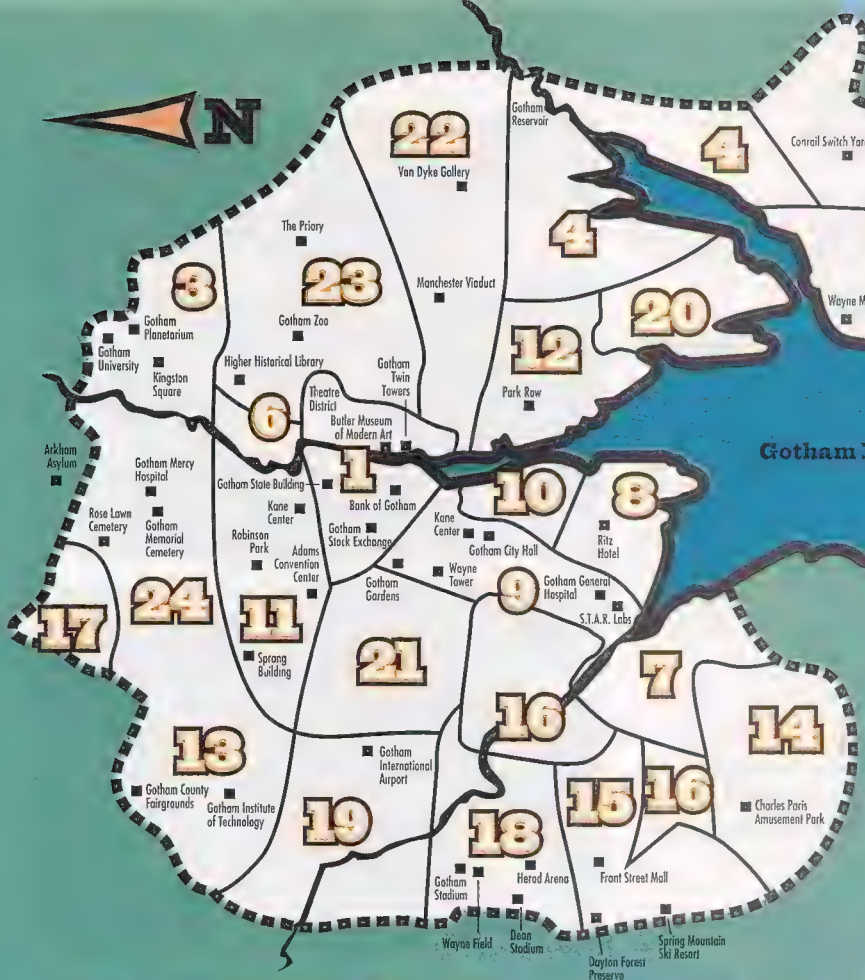
WEATHER RECORDS

(At Robinson Park, except for Wind Record at Gotham Bay Bridge)

Lowest Temp.	-19 degrees	1/19/32
Highest Temp.	107 degrees	8/7/49
Snowiest Day	38 inches	12/24/44
Rainiest Day	10.7 inches	4/15/07
Highest Wind	115 m.p.h.	9/09/56

NOTE:

While usually of moderate climate, Gotham City has been prone to extremes in temperature. Although Chicago is the "Windy City," Gotham's denizens have felt the stab of the "The Knife," Gotham's fierce winter wind.



GOTHAM CITY

1) Central Business District
2) The Lower East Side
3) Chelsea
4) East River
5) Bristol
6) Bryanttown
7) Chinatown
8) Neville
9) Midtown
10) The Waterfront
11) Uptown
12) The Bowery
13) Glendale
14) Evanstown
15) Irving Grove
16) Gotham Village
17) Sommerset
18) Scituate
19) Lyntown
20) Victoria Place
21) Little Stockton
22) Manchester
23) Coventry
24) Charon

POPULAR VISITOR ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS

Gotham Zoo

With millions of visitors per year, the Gotham Zoo is one of the city's biggest centers of tourism. Housing hundreds of animal and insect species, the Gotham Zoo is also at the cutting edge of endangered species conservation. Additionally, the Gotham Zoo's collection of great cats and reptiles rivals any other facility in the world.

Robinson Park

Amidst the sprawling forest of Gotham's concrete and steel towers lies Robinson Park, the largest of the city's parks system. With miles of jogging, biking and rollerblading paths, Robinson Park provides the perfect escape from busy city life…without ever having to leave Gotham.

Gotham Village

Often compared to New York's Greenwich Village, Gotham Village, known familiarly as "Little Bohemia," is the heart of the city's artistic and musical scene. A visit to Gotham is not complete without a stop in one of the many coffeehouses and shops that adorn "Little Bohemia."

Robinson Central Terminal

Millions of commuters and visitors pass through Gotham City's main railroad station, Robinson Central Terminal, each day. Once the Eastern hub of railroad shipping from the Atlantic, RCT still occupies a major portion of the trade commerce passing through Gotham. An excursion to the RCT Rail Museum is well worth the price of admission to relive Gotham's role in the history of our nation's railroads.

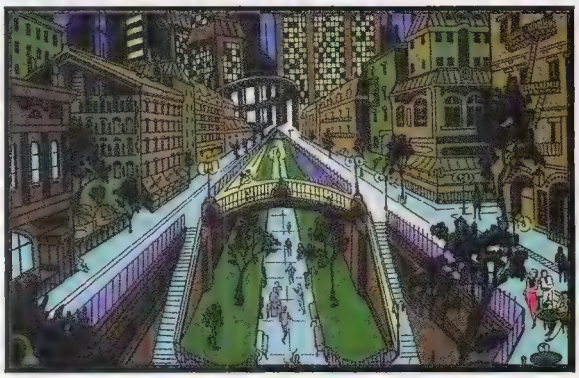
Charles Paris Amusement Park

One of the most unique amusement parks in existence, Charles Paris Amusement Park (nicknamed "Little Paris") is an actual man-made island gracing Gotham Harbor. Built at the turn of the century by partners Charles Paris and William Dunker Sr., "Little Paris" boasts incredible views of the city and the bay. And for the thrill-seekers, "Little Paris" is home to one of the largest extant wooden roller coasters in the United States.

Gotham City Founders' Day Parade

Often coinciding with traditional Thanksgiving Day parade festivities, on November 26th of each year, Gotham celebrates the date of its founding with citywide festivities. Kicked off by a parade rivaled only by the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Tournament of Roses, Gotham honors its birth with a day-long celebration, including street and neighborhood carnivals, as well as the mayor's prestigious Founders' Ball for Charity. Perhaps at no other time is Gotham so unified as during the Founders' Day festivities.

Robinson Park



Gotham Village

Charles Paris Amusement Park

GOTHAM'S FAMOUS FACES

Marion Grange

GOTHAM CITY MAYOR

Known for her "no nonsense" attitude, the former District Attorney has already illustrated an undying love for Gotham and a willingness to work within her ranks to bring significant reform to the city. Only in office a short time, she has shown Gothamites her mettle by tackling the clean-up of the city's recent quarantine from Ebola Gulf A. Plus, she's proven that behind her solemn exterior is a sharp sense of humor, accented by her late-night appearances on "The Late Show with David Letterman" and "The Tonight Show."

James Gordon

GOTHAM CITY POLICE COMMISSIONER

Long admired for his steadfast faith in justice, James Gordon has remained a staple of Gotham's finest for many years since his transfer from the Chicago police force to become a lieutenant for the GCPD (Gotham City Police Department). Gordon led the first charge to rid the GCPD of corruption, eventually succeeding to Police Commissioner following the Joker's attempt to poison the city's reservoir. Gordon still endures as the city's "top cop," and his "hands-on" methods have long been imitated by other cities' commissioners.

Harvey Bullock

GOTHAM CITY POLICE DETECTIVE

One of Gotham's local heroes, GCPD Sergeant Harvey Bullock has been a valuable member of the city's police force for many years, since he made a name for himself cracking the "Singleton Murders" in 1987. A veteran of many undercover operations, as well as one of the "front line" officers in the James Gordon police administration, Bullock's "Columbo-like" exterior belies one of the city's craftiest and most outspoken cops.

Renee Montoya

GOTHAM CITY POLICE DETECTIVE

Working her way up the long ladder from beat cop to police detective, Renee Montoya has excelled in the traditionally "male" police environment. Partnered with Detective Sergeant Harvey Bullock, Montoya has been at the forefront of one of Gotham's best police duos—often leading the investigations of the city's highest-profile cases and offering the perfect counterpoint to the acerbic Bullock.

MacKenzie "Hardback" Bock

GOTHAM CITY POLICE DETECTIVE

While a relative newcomer to the GCPD, MacKenzie "Hardback" Bock made a name for himself when he was a key player in stopping Russian terrorists from bombing Gotham during what the media has dubbed the "Troika Conspiracy." Bock has since proven to be one of Gotham's finest officers, and a welcome addition to an already stand-out police force.

Bruce Wayne

BILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST/PHILANTHROPIST

Certainly one of Gotham's favorite sons, Bruce Wayne employs much of the city through his various corporations (WayneTech, WayneCorps, Wayne Enterprises and the charitable Wayne Foundation). Compared to mogul Donald Trump for the sheer size of his empire, Wayne, however, has never found his Ivana…or Marla, for that matter. Ever the bachelor, the elusive Wayne is often found on many "most eligible" lists, second only to John F. Kennedy Jr.

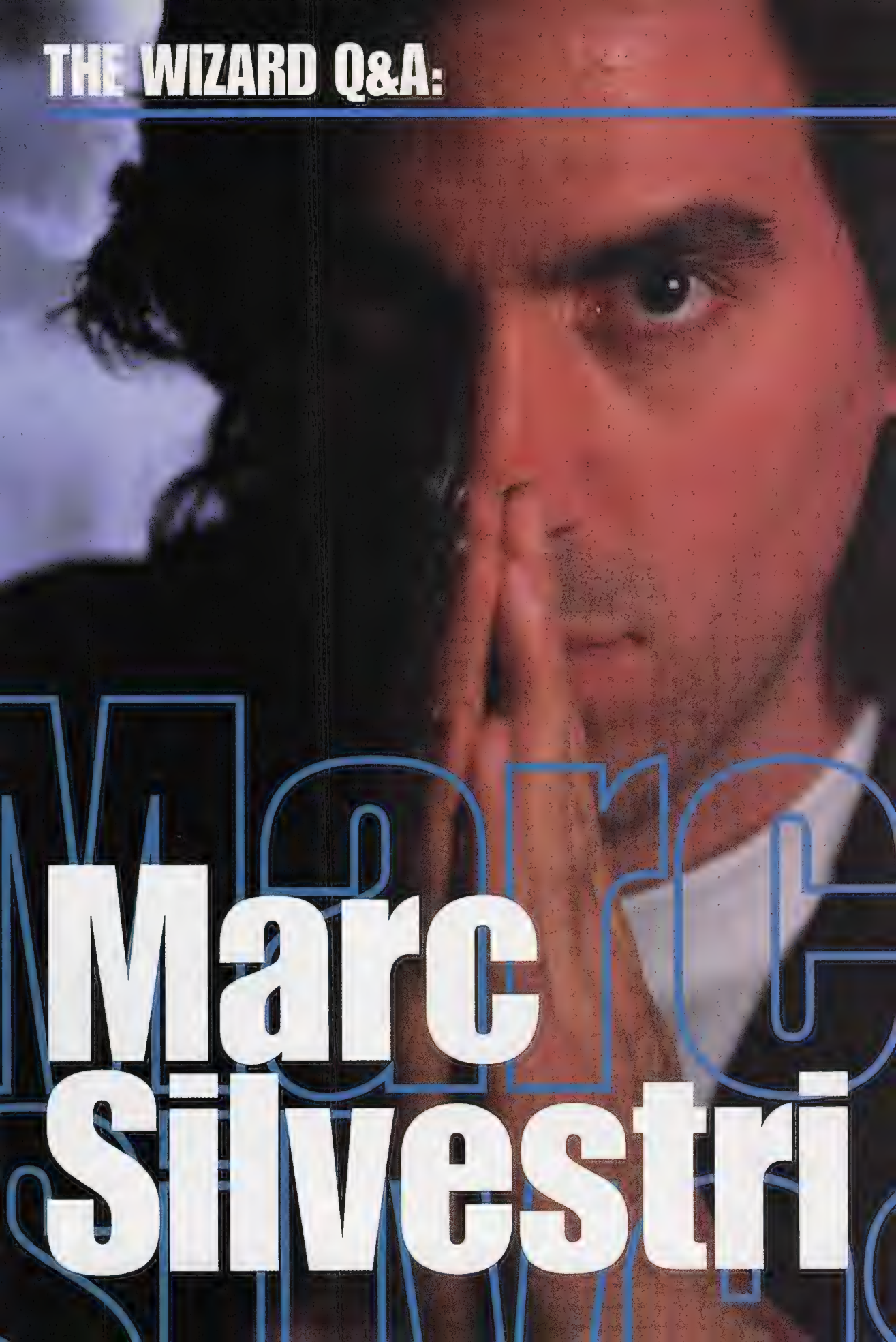
Artist Rendering

The Batman

VIGILANTE

Noted urban folklorist Harvey John Vandburr once theorized that the Batman may have grown out of the collective desire of Gotham's citizens to rid crime of any sort from its streets—in effect, creating a "boogeyman" to scare the city straight. But make no mistake—the Batman is frighteningly real. The Gotham City Police Department has attributed 739 arrests during the last five-year period to the mysterious Batman. The Batman is probably the most elusive vigilante to make any city his home, having been glimpsed only by a few of Gotham's citizens. It has been speculated that there might exist a brigade of "Batmen" guarding Gotham's nights—*a la* Curtis Sliwa's Guardian Angels in New York City.

Scott Beatty visited Gotham City once. Nice town, but the folks there kept telling him about some strange Bat-creature. Buncha weirdos.


THE WIZARD Q&A:
Marc Silvestri

NO LONGER IMAGE-CONSCIOUS, MARC SILVESTRI EXPLAINS HIS DEPARTURE AND GIVES US A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

BY MARC SHAPIRO
photos by Craig Molenhouse

Marc Silvestri has always gone his own way.

In 1992 he broke away from his secure Marvel job as penciler of the top-selling *Wolverine* to help form Image Comics. Now he's breaking away from his secure placement inside the cushy confines of Image, set to go his own way with Top Cow Comics.

And this is coming off a string of high notes for Silvestri. He recently announced that after a year-long absence, he will return to monthly penciling on Top Cow's newest creation *The Darkness*, teamed with white-hot writer Garth Ennis. And Silvestri's hit *Witchblade* series, less than a year old, is doing so well that he's giving the title a spinoff in October. And there's his first big multimedia push with the *21* comic book/cartoon/toy deal ready to blitz fans this fall.

Wizard finally caught up with the upbeat though somewhat cautious Silvestri on a recent weekday afternoon. It was in a climate of excitement, anticipation and, when it came to the inevitable questions about Top Cow's split from Image, a mix of political correctness and candor.

WIZARD: Just to make it official: Top Cow has split from Image.

MARC SILVESTRI: Yes. We did do that.

Why the split?

I felt I was moving in a direction in which I felt I needed some new challenges. I needed something that would bring back the old enthusiasm that I had and the old creative energy that I never want to lose.

Did you find that being associated with Image did not give you that infusion of energy anymore?

It's more a matter of fulfillment that I feel I personally need. It's not like Image was holding me back. Image has always been a kind of loose confederacy where people could pretty much do what they want. But there's nothing like the complete freedom to do whatever you want to your satisfaction and not having to worry about what somebody else is feeling. Plus, once in a while there would be personality clashes with people at Image. It got to the point where what I was involved in was no longer fun.

Did the clashes at Image have anything to do with the Image/Marvel situation involving Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld's "Heroes Reborn"?

Absolutely not. That never came into play. I have to stress the fact that I still love the Image guys and I still get along with most of them. There was just a clash between myself and one other person at Image. And that clash kind of brought the final decision to leave to a head for me.

Was it one of the Image founding fathers?

Yes. But I won't tell you who it is, because it's not something I really want to do. Suffice it to say I get along very well with most of the Image people. I've been talking to Jim and Rob…[*pause*] I mean Jim and Todd [McFarlane]. Well, I think that kind of answers your question. I've been in contact with Jim and Todd, and we definitely want to work together, even after I make the final split from Image. We respect each other and we respect what we've done.

Was it a tough decision to make?

It doesn't seem like it now, because I've made the decision and I've talked to Jim and Todd. They understand why I made the decision and they support me in that decision. Their support was crucial to my making the decision I did. The thing that upset me most about the thought of leaving Image was that these were two gentlemen who I respect greatly and who I consider my friends at Image. I was concerned by how they would be affected by this and how our relationship would be affected. I had already made the decision to leave in my mind. I had a couple of conversations with Todd and Larry Marder, and they said some nice things that kind of brought the misty eyes back. They indicated to me that they still felt we could make things work. But I felt this was the right thing to do. Their support for my decision really touched me.

You knew going in that Image was going to overshadow Top Cow.

Top Cow was definitely overshadowed by Image in the beginning. I can't say, "What are you talking about?" When Image started out, it was obviously the Todd, Rob and Jim show, and I understood that. For the most part, that was not being rubbed in my face. Respect for myself and Top Cow was one of the things I knew I had to earn from the industry and the fans. We worked very hard for it. But at Top Cow we always had the plan to make people want to seek out our books.

There has been a rumor that, with your departure, and Jim and Rob both involved with their own lines of books independent of Image, that Image is about ready to go under.

I hope that doesn't happen. I've talked to Todd and Jim, and that possibility was one of the topics that came up. As long as those two are together, I see no reason why Image should disappear.

You come across as a real nice guy in Don Simpson's 1993 parody book *Splittin' Image*. Do you agree with that picture of you?

To a degree. At least the part about being able to get along with people. My life is complex enough

without having to make enemies. But if somebody gets in my face or threatens my family or myself, I'll get right back in their face and I'll do more than defend myself. I'm not the kind of guy who goes around smacking people, and I think that's helped me. The one thing that I am proud of is that people want to work with me.

Are there any ground rules for dealing with Marc Silvestri?

The only thing people need to know is to be yourself. I'm a pretty easy guy to get along with. Most of the people who meet me are usually surprised. I'll never snub anybody. I love talking to people. Obviously, some personalities gel better than others, but I'm never going to tell anyone to not even try to gel with me.

You're working with Garth Ennis on *The Darkness*.

He's a real wild man. I love what he does.

Is he easy or difficult to work with?

He could definitely be a problem to work with if he wasn't so damned talented. Garth has a lot of ideas and opinions that he likes to stick with, and a lot of his ideas are good. We've fought between what I want to do and what he wants to do. And we've found out that if we put our points of view together, we [create] something even better. The stuff he's giving me on *The Darkness* is awesome, and he's inspiring me to do things that I haven't done before.

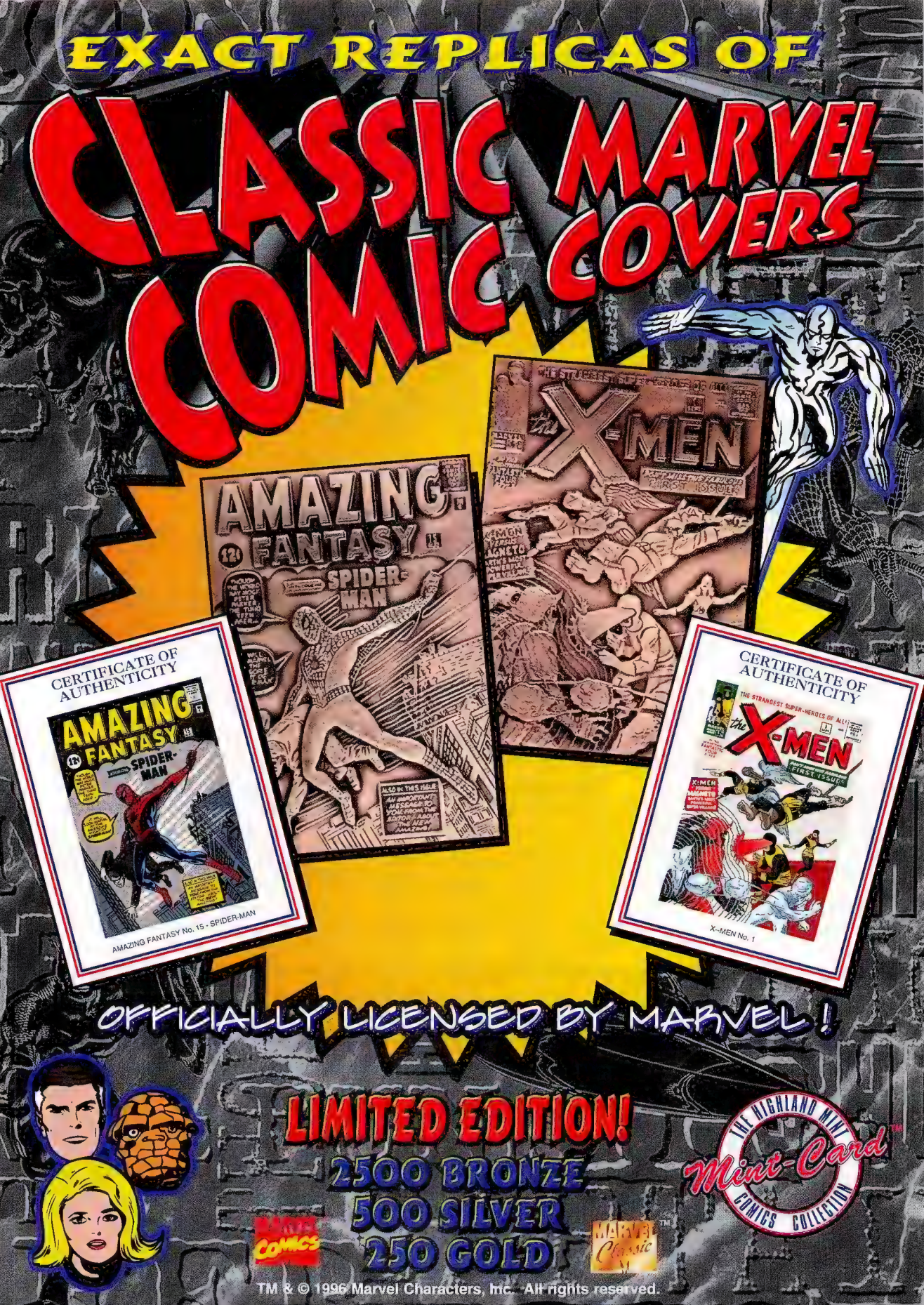
Is Top Cow gearing up for a stronger writing base, and are other big names slated to come on board?

We're talking to some people right now, but out of respect for them, I don't want to name names right now. But a stronger writing base is defi-

Name: Marc Joseph Silvestri
Date of Birth: March 29, 1958
Occupation: Artist/Publisher
Base of Operations: Top Cow Comics, Santa Monica, Calif.
Career Highlights: Lengthy stints on Marvel Comics' *Uncanny X-Men* and *Wolverine*; co-founding Image Comics in 1992, which redefined the independent comic book market; breaking away from Image in June 1996 to form his independent Top Cow Comics.

EXACT REPLICAS OF

CLASSIC MARVEL COMIC COVERS



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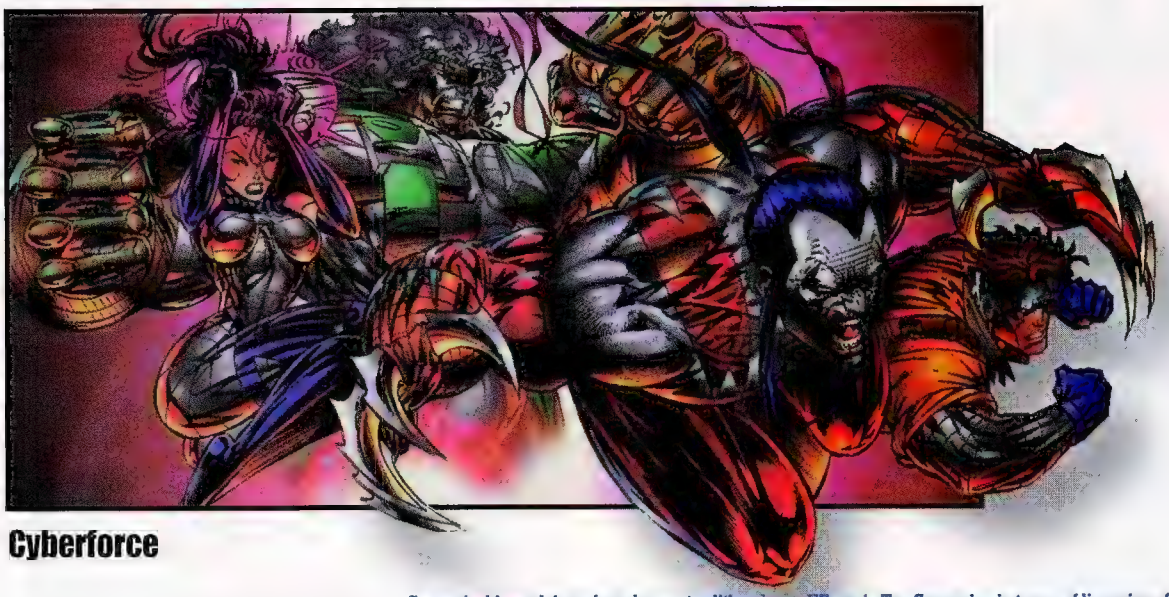

Cyberforce

nitely where we're going. I feel, artistically, we're one of the strongest companies in the industry right now. In terms of content and story, I think we're definitely building. Comics are an evolutionary process. You can't ever say, 'This is the best comic I'll ever make.' You can never sit down and be totally satisfied with yourself. If you ever reach the point where you say that, you should get out of the business.

What kept you away from penciling on a monthly basis for so long?

I felt I had earned a break. I had been drawing steadily for 14 years and I needed to recharge the batteries. I also felt I wanted to concentrate on other aspects of the business and make relationships in other areas of Top Cow's dealings more solid.

When you did finally return to the monthly grind, it seemed almost a lock that you would start with *Cyberforce*. Why return with *The Darkness*?

I needed something new. It's something, even more than *Cyberforce*, that I feel is a comfort zone creatively for me. I feel I can surround myself with this universe and draw more from my gut.

So you feel freer doing a largely non-traditional superhero book?

The Darkness isn't necessarily a non-superhero book, but it does have other elements to it. The world surrounding the *Darkness* character is largely realistic, which appealed to me. The gothic elements of the character also appealed to me. When Garth came on board with his boot-up-your-ass kind of storytelling, I felt I was coming back to something special.

Is your style getting slicker?

I don't think with *The Darkness* I'll be disappointing any fans who are expecting a slicker style from me. It's slicker, but there's also more texture to it. The overall design is very elaborate, which I think is unusual for this kind of subject matter.

Has Jim Lee been more of an influence for you in recent years?

Absolutely. I think it's kind of obvious over the past couple of years, as well as the last couple of years of my career at Marvel. During that period I was definitely beginning to get a Jim influence. His influences have always been my influences anyway, so Jim has always been a kind of natural progression for me.

Where is Top Cow going in terms of licensing of toys, cartoons and movies?

We have toy licenses with Mattel for Cyberforce toys, and Playmates has the license for toys [adapting the series *21*]. We also have an [animated] film deal with Film Roman for *21* and we're still going to be working with Fox.

You're also still working with Marvel. Is *Star Trek: X-Men* the first of many Marvel crossovers?

No. But I don't want to get too specific at this point. [*EDITOR'S NOTE: For specifics, see sidebar below.*] Let's just say that we are doing other things with Marvel. Those things are already in the works and they're already a done deal. All I can say at this point is that they will be big things and fun things.

There's also talk that you will be doing other Marvel books. *Punisher*, *Ghost Rider* and *Silver Surfer* are some of the titles you're rumored to be considering.

Those are interesting titles. There has been some talk of my doing something at Marvel. It's going to be fun to do things at Marvel, and I think those things will ultimately benefit both companies. And I want to stress that Bob Harras [Silvestri's former *Wolverine* editor, now Marvel editor-in-chief] and I were never really at odds, even when Image started.

'Star Trek' meets The X-Men

"We were worried about how we were going to pull this off," says Marc Silvestri about the self-contained *Star Trek: X-Men* one-shot he's drawn for Marvel Comics, shipping in late August. "Even though 'Star Trek' is fantasy, it basically has its origin as a live-action TV show. So the challenge was to bring 'Star Trek' into a comic book realm populated by truly fantastic characters like the X-Men. We had a number of conversations and now I can honestly say, 'Trust me. We've pulled it off.' "

An interesting pairing, to say the least. But the big question remains: why do it?

Says Silvestri, "It was something that appealed to me because I'm an old 'Star Trek' fan and, obviously, I have an X-Men connection. Bob Harras approached me with the idea and I thought it was a good idea."

The team-up storyline, written by X-Men writer Scott Lobdell, begins when the X-Men villain Proteus is sent into an extradimensional plane, where he meets up with Classic "Star Trek" character Gary Mitchell, Kirk's former best friend. Proteus—whose mutant power is to warp reality—takes over Mitchell's body and this creates a dimensional rift that ends up merging the "Star Trek" and X-Men universes. The one-shot takes place out of continuity, explaining the appearances of Proteus and Mitchell, both of whom are dead in their respective universes.

Silvestri hints that "this story will deal with Kirk's prejudice against mutants and a rather painful experience from Kirk's past. The 'Star Trek' and X-Men characters will be essentially on the same side."

"I didn't see doing this book as being so much a challenge as an opportunity," says Lobdell. "I know that just screams cliché, but I only saw this as being a tremendous amount of fun. I think, in a way, these characters are almost kind of ancestors to each other. Both groups are trying to find their way in the world and the universe."

The writer concedes that the crowded house of the two universes colliding does not necessarily make for equal representation in the crossover. "Had this been a 10-part story or even a four-part story, there would have been more time to play with the characters. The more peripheral characters will at least get some solid character bits. But it will be the main characters that will get the spotlight."

As for the X-Men lineup, look for such characters as Bishop, Gambit, Jean Grey, Wolverine, Cyclops and Beast to be starring. And the "Trek" lineup? Jokes Silvestri, "Kirk, Spock... basically whoever I can draw." ■ *MS*

IRON MAN
CAPTAIN AMERICA
FANTASTIC FOUR
AVENGERS
HEROES REBORN
JIM LEE AND ROB LIEFELD
MARVEL COMICS
Thanks to our readers and creators for 21 "1996 Wizard Fan Awards."
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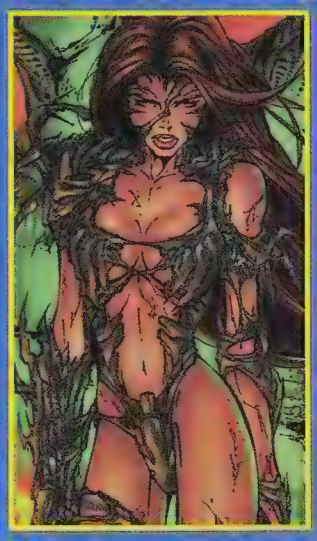
Is it true that Marvel talked to everybody at Image about "Unfinished Business"?

I know for a fact they talked to Jim and I. At that time it was not necessarily something I wanted to get involved in. I was still trying to get Top Cow where I thought it should be. I really didn't need the added responsibility of taking over a couple of Marvel books. So while I was flattered by the offer, I declined. I didn't think it was right for me and I still don't think that kind of deal is right for me. The things that Top Cow does with Marvel are not going to be along those same lines.

New Era for Top Cow

Top Cow Comics has some mighty big plans for its new and continuing books through the remainder of this year. Here's some of the exciting highlights you can look forward to in the coming months.

Cyberforce The Cyberforce headquarters will be destroyed in #26. Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's Ash will guest-star in issue #27, and Ash's angelic associate Gabriel will guest in #28. With Cyberdata gone, Cyberforce will seek a new direction. Besides acting much more like an active superhero team, they'll travel to different locations and go on assorted missions. Look for other Top Cow characters like Witchblade, the Darkness and even Kill Razor (from *Codename: Stryke Force*) to make appearances at some point.



Witchblade (At left) A serial killer storyline begins later this year, and explains just how the killer is connected to Witchblade. August's issue #9 offers a preview of *The Darkness*, while #10 sees a crossover between Witchblade and The Darkness, which leads into the ongoing *Darkness* series.

Tales of the Witchblade Beginning in October, this quarterly anthology is devoted to different users of the Witchblade gauntlet throughout time. Similar to DC's *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*, it will feature a revolving crew of creators.

The Darkness A lonely, immortal crimefighter named Jackie has an unwanted power to create anything he wants to within the darkness, but come sunup, his creations disappear. The series launch is set for November.

Weapon Zero (Below) Besides the return of the *Weapon Zero* mini-series, supervillain Tho Ng-ahh, you'll also see the return of the aliens who went down with their ship in the first issue of the mini-series (#1-4) and learn about their pre-historic origin.

21 Top Cow was super-tight-lipped about the future of this series. But with a toy line and animated series in the works, expect some sort of big push with this title in the future.

Nine Volt This *X-Files*-inspired book, with story and art by Anthony Chun, debuts in November and centers on investigations of extraterrestrials and paranormal activity. It stars a rover government group, human Frank Holder, alien Ragnar and Digit, a robotic little girl.

Arcanum This first official Top Cow Comics book, written and penciled by Brandon Peterson with inks by Bob, begins in October with evil wizards, ancient artifacts and the impending apocalypse. This book is a spinoff from the *Spawn/Witchblade* mini-series and features a character named Chi, who must decide whether to use her powers for good or evil. Lurking in the background as the personification of evil is Matthew Royale. ■ *MS*

When Universes Collide!

The Marvel and Top Cow Universes go head-on beginning in December with a weekly, as-yet-untitled eight-page mini-series pitting the biggest and baddest in a self-contained, no-holds-barred adventure.

Top Cow editor David Wohl offers, "Since Top Cow initiated the crossover, we're trying to keep this as hands-on as possible. It will be one continuing story arc, involving members of both universes."

The storyline features Mephisto, who comes to the Top Cow Universe from the Marvel Universe, giving up his role of the leader of Hell to wreak havoc in the Top Cow Universe, and in the process, turns a major Top Cow hero into a villain. The Top Cow representatives in this battle royale include Witchblade, Ballistic, Cyblade and Weapon Zero. In the Marvel corner are Ghost Rider, Wolverine, Silver Surfer and Elektra.

Handling the drawing on these books are Marc Silvestri, Joe Benitez and Mike Turner. Contributing on the writer's side will be Howard Mackie, Walt Simonson, David Wohl, Christina Z and Brian Holguin. Coordinating the project is Marvel editor Mark Gruenwald. ■ *MS*

By saying no, you probably avoided being considered a sellout in some quarters.

I don't know about that, but I don't think my association with Marvel is going to be perceived as being a sellout. It's something that's primarily a creative endeavor between two companies.

Besides, Jim and Rob have already taken a lot of the heat.

That's true. But I think a lot of people are actually looking forward to seeing what Jim is going to do. I know I'm going to get a real kick out of seeing his *Fantastic Four*. Sure, there's been heat in some quarters, but I also think there's been some positive response to what he's doing.

What separates Witchblade from other Bad Girls?

Witchblade is one of the first books in which we've taken complete and total care. We established the character rock-solid in our minds before we even started writing stories. We really worked on the book before we decided to publish. I've never been in the habit of just throwing a book out because I needed a book that month. I think that's the real difference.

Who do you consider the best character you've come up with?

This is going to have to be left up to the readers to decide, but I would have to say it's the *Darkness* character. He's not the two-dimensional cardboard comic character that a lot of people have been subjected to over the years. I'd also have to put Witchblade into that category.

What would you like to be known for down at the end of the line?

Hopefully to have been considered an innovator and a creative force in the industry. I would also hope to be a guy who got respect from his peers and his fans. And finally, to be known as somebody who never mistreated anyone.

What specific mark do you believe you've made so far in the industry?

Being associated with Image right off the bat would probably be right at the top. I'm hoping that my building Top Cow will be an even bigger mark than that.

Fans haven't seen too much of your penciling work lately, presumably because you've been quite busy behind the scenes. Are you a workaholic?

Yeah, I think I am. But I don't mean it in a negative way. I don't see anything wrong with being that way. Being in comics is stressful and it's stressful for the people around you. The people who are in my life know that. If you want to get into comics, you've got to be prepared for that. Comics is an obsession that takes over your life.

So it's safe to say that one day people will walk into your studio and find you slumped over dead on your drawing table?

Yeah. That's where they'll find me. They'll find me dead in my own drool. And that will be fine with me. W

Marc Shapiro, who spotlighted five small press books elsewhere in this issue, once found himself waking up in a puddle of drool. Unfortunately, it wasn't his.

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FIRE DRILL

FROM CONCEPT TO COMIC, WIZARD GOES INSIDE THE WORLD OF ASH #0

It's January 15, just after New York's biggest snowfall, and seven-foot plowed snowdrifts pile outside Joe Quesada's small apartment in the Madison Square area of Manhattan. Inside, Quesada is penciling Ash #0 on a drawing table snugly fit below his overhead bed. He peers into mirrors, using his own face as reference for the fire-fighting hero. A fireman's helmet sits behind him and a fireman's coat hangs in a nearby closet. The only thing missing is a polished fire-pole leading to the street below.

Little did Quesada or his Event Comics cohorts Jimmy Palmiotti and Laurie Bradach know at the time that the snow would have long since melted when Ash #0 finally rolled off the Quebecor presses in Canada.

So how does a book that conceptually began nearly two years ago and was in active production starting in November actually get made? That's what *Wizard* set out to learn as we accompanied Event Comics through the making of *Ash* #0, from conception to completion.

What we didn't expect was a six-month odyssey.

PLOTTING AND SCRIPTING

December 1995: Joe and Jimmy meet in Quesada's cramped apartment to discuss the plot of *Ash* #0.

"The plot didn't take that long," Quesada says. "What took the longest was organizing the plot and putting it together in one cohesive story."

Ash #0 tells two stories: One involving the apocalyptic journeys of the future Ash, Gunther DelSantiago, while the other tale follows present-day Ashley Quinn, who learns the secrets of Ash and his powers while trapped inside a C.O.L.D. (Coffin of Life and Death) unit. The entire book involves time travel and different eras, thus Quesada and Palmiotti work hard to make the story as clear as possible. For *Ash* #0, the team operates in a totally different style, using huge text blocks as narrative.

Quesada and Palmiotti basically write two individual stories, breaking down the action on index cards. Discussion then turns to what events are crucial, which ones can be left out—and finally how to organize and link them. Palmiotti sits down with the index cards, and Quesada paces the floor, discussing the sequence of events as Ashley discovers the C.O.L.D. machine in a burning building.

"Y'know what?" says Quesada. "We don't need to see that alarm ring. We don't need to see them getting into the truck. It's completely unnecessary. What you need to see is that burning building with the firemen on the fire escape. You know how they got there. We don't have to get into that whole scene. Just establish the building."

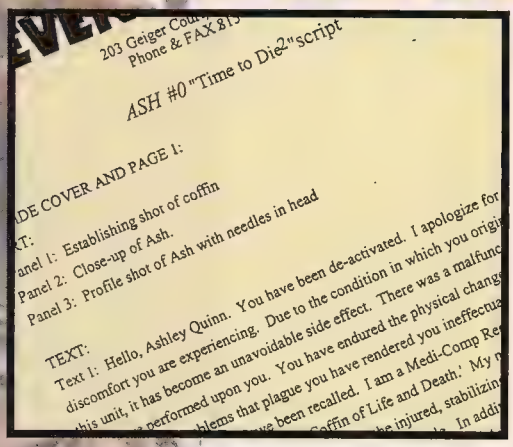
And so it goes for about three weeks—Quesada and Palmiotti negotiating the events of the story to their mutual satisfaction.

Quesada and Palmiotti hash out the plot on index cards (above); Quesada then writes the script and begins thumbnails (right)

DIALOGUE

Quesada and Palmiotti usually don't dialogue the book in full-script form, but again, *Ash* #0 is an exception. Quesada turns the index cards into a script, hand-scribbled on a yellow legal pad. The original concept calls the future Ash "Pelham" instead of "Gunther." Quesada likes the name Gun, and although Palmiotti thinks that name is a little too "weapony," they both like Gunther better than Pelham and make the changes accordingly.

Quesada's script, with thumbnail page breakdowns, is sent to Event


203 Geiger Cou
Phone & FAX 81
ASH #0 "Time to Die-2" script
DE COVER AND PAGE 1:
T:
anel 1: Establishing shot of coffin
Panel 2: Close-up of Ash.
Panel 3: Profile shot of Ash with needles in head
TEXT:
Text 1: Hello, Ashley Quinn. You have been de-activated. I apologize for
discomfort you are experiencing. Due to the condition in which you origi
this unit, it has become an unavoidable side effect. There was a malfunc
performed upon you. You have endured the physical chang
blems that plague you have rendered you ineffectua
been recalled. I am a Medi-Comp Re
Coffin of Life and Death.' My
injured, stabilizin
In addi

Publisher and Editor Laurie Bradach for approval. Despite some minor flaws—sci-fi terms that might be confusing—everyone agrees it's okay for Quesada to commence penciling.

PENCILING

In late December, Quesada begins with thumbnail layouts on post-its.

"I like to do pages smaller first. It's an old artist's trick," he says, explaining the rationale behind the tiny sketches. "Since we work on this size [he holds up traditional drawing page], it's very difficult to see the whole page in one view. Your eye can only grasp about half of an 11" x 17" board. [The thumbnail] is essentially what the breakdown will look like when it's printed, so I get an idea of what the reader will see."

Quesada takes the smaller layouts to his copying machine and enlarges them to the proper page size. He tapes a copied enlargement onto his light box and puts his drawing board on top of it. Finally, he traces over to get the layouts at the proper size.

Since *Ash #0* makes extensive use of text blocks rather than word balloons to relate the story, Quesada alters his standard approach to penciling.

"Because of the complexity of the book, it had to be all be figured out, panel by panel [in advance]," he says. "Usually, I don't know how the 22nd page is going to look because I'm doing it one page at a time. I don't like to lay out all the pages of a book at once. It just burns me out completely. I find that my layouts get really dry by the time I get to the last page. This book happened to be an exception, and all the dialogue and sound effects are included [in the story outline]."

While he draws, Quesada takes advantage of his wealth of reference materials.

"If you need Dobermans, I got a whole book on Dobermans," he laughs of his mini-library.

One of the biggest challenges Quesada encounters is drawing

Once the script is approved, Quesada begins penciling, tracing his thumbnails

BY ROB ALLSTETTER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

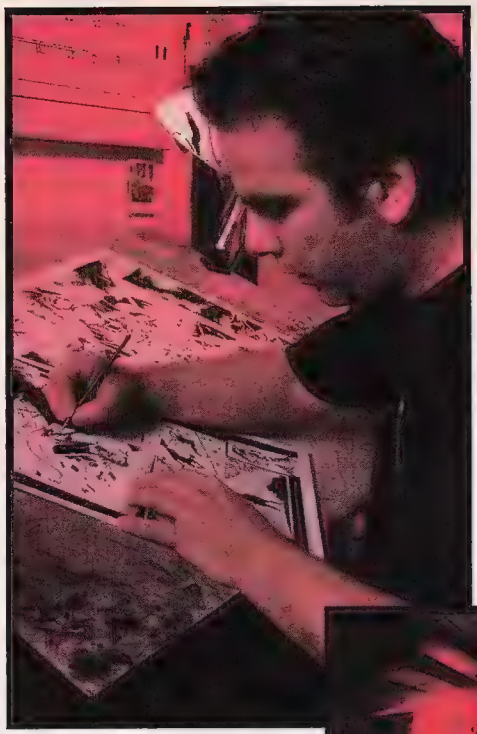
horses, which figure prominently in the future storyline. "It's difficult because I haven't drawn many before," he says. "I try to make them long, heavy horses like [Frank] Frazetta horses."

As the penciling progresses, Quesada is particularly impressed with his work on some text-free pages involving Ashley Quinn's rescue of a baby in burning building.

"It gives you the impression on how quickly the damn thing happens," Quesada says. "I'm very proud of that page. I don't know how I could have done it better."

Quesada pencils *Ash* #0 well into late spring. "Joe was slow, very slow," says Bradach. "He's actually pretty fast once he starts his pencils, but he gets distracted very easily."

One of the distractions comes from Hollywood. During the penciling process, Quesada heads to California twice with Palmiotti between January and March to discuss the "Ash" animated movie (see this issue's "Trailer Park") with DreamWorks SKG. Various convention appearances and talks with DC Comics for the *Ash/Azrael* crossover also get in the way.



Palmiotti begins his inking chores

INKING

Beginning in early February, Quesada's first penciled pages are delivered to Palmiotti in Brooklyn by assistant Joe Delfini. Each page has a duplicate copy attached to be used for reference in case of any pencil smudges or spills—or heaven forbid—the originals are lost.

Palmiotti can usually ink just one of Quesada's pages a day.

"Lots of times I can do other guys faster, but Joe's one a day. The detail on his pages just requires a lot of time," says Palmiotti. "Joe does not take the easy way out with any of the drawings. If he can find a more complicated, detailed way of doing a stick, he'll do it. If there's a dime on the floor, usually it will be on the floor of the Sistine Chapel…with 8,000 tiles and some sort of an angle with the ceiling."

Unlike Quesada's confined working quarters, Palmiotti's digs are more spacious. "You can spit from one end to another," jokes Palmiotti, who experiments with his inks for *Ash* #0.

"I used a little stronger line weights to separate the background from the foreground," he says. "I try to ink loyally, and Joe pencils with a fine line. But with this issue, I didn't have to take things so literally. It has a [Bernie] Wrightson type linework to it—a little different than the usual Joe."

Palmiotti points to the heavier inking in the burning building scene on page 15 of *Ash* #0 as an example of how it contributes to a more tangible sense of action. He's also pleased with the inking effects on the green smoke inside the C.O.L.D. unit (seen at the end of the issue), which is done by inking the page with a red pen and then having it dropped out on the black plate during printing, creating color on color. He's also excited about the "Conan-like" aspects of *Ash* #0, with the horses and outdoor locales.

Palmiotti keeps pace a day behind Quesada's pencils as they are completed, but he can't overcome Quesada's tardiness. "I've never been late with a book in my life," he says of his inking. "Joe was late. I don't know how else to say it."

In the end, Jimmy finishes inking just a few days after Joe has completed penciling.

COLORING

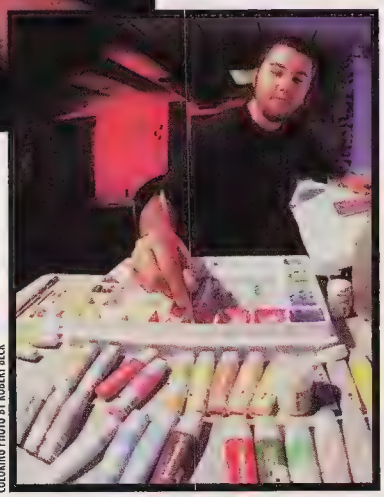
As spring approaches, the next step in production of *Ash* #0 involves Reuben Rude, who hand-colors every issue of Ash. Rude uses all the tricks of the trade, including water colors, liquid dyes, pencils, paints and "those stinky markers."

"Reuben established a lot of the coloring himself since he started from issue one," Palmiotti says, stressing the importance of Rude's work. "A good way to actually keep up a comic book is to keep the same colorist. He does call and ask questions. He's worried about time of day, about how light bounces off things and the key elements."

Part of the challenge of *Ash* #0 for Rude was how to present the future world and the first appearance of the brown-clad Gunther DelSantiago.

"What colors we used for the sky were important," says Palmiotti. "We were looking for purples and blues, nothing too warm looking. No big reds and yellows. We were saving that for the city."

"We wanted a paler palette for a dreary, gray kind of world," Quesada adds.



COLORING PHOTO BY ROBERT BECK

Reuben Rude hand colors the artwork, which will then be separated by computer

The pages are reduced to 65 percent for Rude to do the color guides, so he actually colors them closer to the scale of the printed comic. It takes him up to 10 hours to color each page, and he says he can never do more than two pages of *Ash* in a day.

"They tend to draw more detail and it's more dense," Rude says. "It's more time-consuming than any other job I've ever done."

Upon completion, Rude's color guides are sent to Comicolor in Long Island, where a computer disk scanned from the artwork is used to match up the colors on the guides. The color proofs, or irises, are shipped overnight to Bradach and checked several times for accuracy.

LETTERING

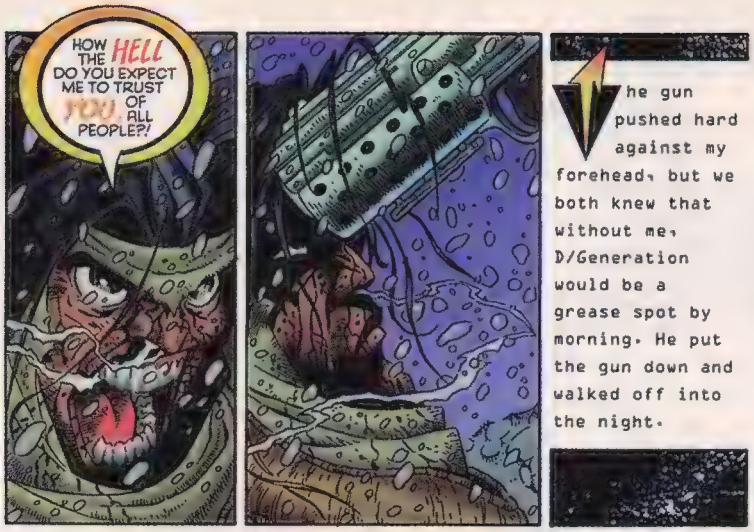
Since *Ash* #0 makes dramatic use of text blocks, Richard Starkings and his Comicraft company are brought in to computer letter the issue, replacing letterer Chris Eliopoulos who's now working on Event's *22 Brides* miniseries. Beginning with the *Ash* trade paperback, Starkings and his crew of 12 also help design the comic.

"We do everything you see that is typeset, including the cover layout and the re-styling of the *Ash* logo," says Starkings, whose company uses eight balloon-lettering fonts and some 30 to 40 sound-effects fonts.

Unfortunately, because of foil-stamping on the cover, the re-tinkered *Ash* logo won't fully show until the next series. But readers of *Ash* #0 can see how Starkings and company use the logo as a basis for the new stylized capital letters that begin certain text boxes.

"It's a different-looking issue. There's a lot of text, but it still works as a comic book," Starkings says. "Hopefully, when people see *Ash* #0, they'll feel Comicraft made a visible contribution in an invisible way."

The major contribution, notes Laurie Bradach, is that Comicraft is much faster than other lettering.



Comicraft handles the lettering, which has the traditional word balloons, as well as a great deal of body text

The lettering chores on *Ash* #0, including spell-checking and editing, take only three days—the fastest leg of the six-month process.

COVER TO COVER

The twin covers for *Ash* #0 are done at the beginning and end of the creative process. The present-day Ash is done for solicitation purposes, while the future Ash is completed at the end. Along the way, an idea to pose the future Ash like the present version is scrapped in order to greater convey the imagery of the future.

"The only challenge is that every *Ash* cover is a wraparound cover, which is something we're putting an end to," says Quesada. "There's a limited number of things you can do with wraparounds to make them effective. You're always splitting them in half, and I'm stickler for making the back work as much as the front. Sometimes a single-image cover on the front is a bit more effective."

FINAL EDITING AND PRE-PRODUCTION

Near the middle of April, Editor Laurie Bradach assembles all the "parts" of *Ash* #0, completing final editing and readying the title for printing.

"This whole book is the new calm Laurie," laughs Bradach, an eagle-eyed troubleshooter who struggles with her temper.

In addition to content editing *Ash* #0, Bradach oversees production of the comic, including the printing in Canada. She's always waiting for that late-night phone call about the newest glitch. And, sure enough, the call comes around 9:30 p.m. as the book is ready to go to press.

"Laurie, there are a couple of minor mistakes you should know about," says the printer.

"I've never, ever had a book leave my possession where I don't hear those words," Bradach says.

This time, it comes from Comicolor with two problems: 1) Several of the lines around the text boxes did not match up and were 1/64th of an inch off; and 2) The computer had "hiccuped" and dropped out words in the middle of sentences in a couple of text boxes.

The first problem is easily solved by doubling the size of the lines around the text boxes so they fit together evenly. The second problem is more severe because it affects the content. Comicolor immediately sends corrections via modem to Quebecor to replace the corrupted page.

"I lose my mind," Bradach says of such problems. "I rant and rave for a little bit, and then I call a series of people—my husband, my mother-in-law, my sister—and make them realize how hard my life is. There's always someone to calm me down."

Before final printing, Bradach gets a "blue line," a copy of the comic made from the final film before the book goes to press. She checks to make sure the pages are in the correct numerical order and that the trim marks where the paper will be cut do not cut off any text or images. Then it's off to the presses.

PRINTING

After her last-minute corrections, the state-of-the-art presses are off, printing some 1,000 copies a minute for the nearly 100,000-copy run. Juan Campbell of Quebecor watches the run to make sure everything goes as planned.

It doesn't happen. For some unexplained reason, the foil does not adhere to the covers—a serious on-press problem. Bradach gets another call, this one early in the morning, and quickly decides to switch to a better foil.

When the books are finally printed, Quebecor then follows an order sheet filled out by Bradach 10 days earlier, counting the books and carefully boxing them. Bigger distributors pick up their own comics. Others are mailed out.

"We go over it and over it," Bradach says of the process. "And there are still mistakes. I don't think it's humanly possibly not to have some."

And, after all that, even Bradach doesn't see the completed book until it hits the stands. Her Federal Express package contains only the covers.

"Somebody forgot to put the guts in," she laughs. An imperfect ending to an imperfect process—but the results are well worth the wait.

On a Monday morning in late May, Jimmy Palmiotti is awakened by Federal Express. Wearing a big blue terrycloth robe, the drowsy Palmiotti opens the door to his Brooklyn apartment to sign for a package containing two complete copies of *Ash* #0.

"I was very relieved," says Palmiotti, finally seeing the fruits of his labors. "It's the best work we've ever done."

Rob Allstetter has a big blue terrycloth robe of his own, but don't expect him to answer the door wearing it. That's reserved for the red one with the tassels.

The blue lines are the last stage before the final printing

Small World

Spotlighting five small press books that have fans talking

by Marc Shapiro

SO THERE YOU ARE, FLIPPING THROUGH THE RACK AT YOUR LOCAL COMIC STORE.

You've got a few extra dollars burning a hole in your pocket, ready to be spent.

As you scan the titles, you see your usual favorites—*Spawn*, *X-Men*, *Batman* and *Spider-Man*.

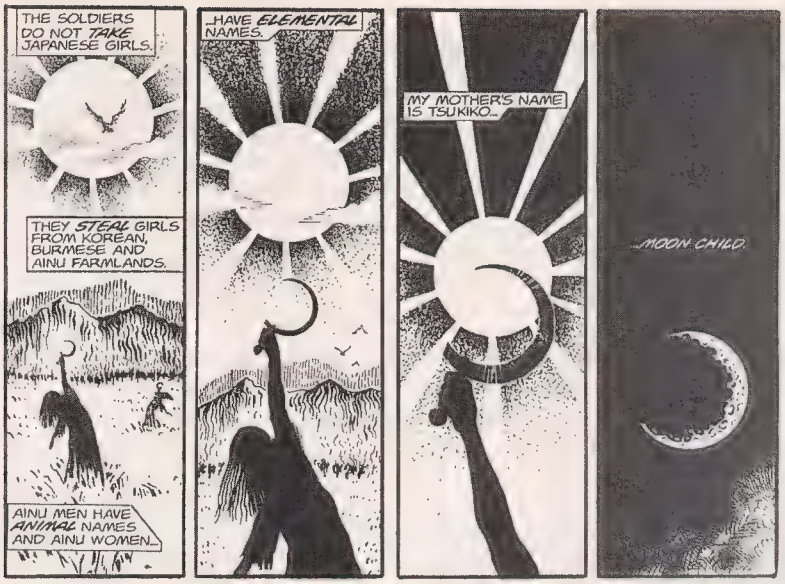
But you're in the mood for something unique, something unusual, something...different.

Well, you've come to the right place. With all the titles in the marketplace today, it's impossible to keep up with everything. That goes double for the small press, where many quality titles get lost in the shadows of the major companies.

So, to give these books a little nudge, *Wizard* has isolated five small press titles that are currently creating a bit of a stir. These five titles—David Mack's *Kabuki*, The Ortiz Brothers and Gene Jimenez's *Araknis*, Jeff Amano's *TaoLand*, Fred Perry's *Gold Digger* and Mark Crilley's *Akiko*—aren't your average superhero fare. They focus on everything from shape-shifting archaeologists to a world where animals reign supreme.

And who knows whether one of them is the next *Shi*, *Bone* or *Stray Bullets*?

So read them, learn them, love them. And remember, you heard it here first.



Kabuki (opposite left and above) walks a thin line between crime and espionage

Kabuki

Kabuki creator David Mack is normally a pretty modest cat. But when it comes to talking about his comic book creation, *Kabuki*, he knows what hits the paneled page is good!

"In terms of art and story, I know I'm definitely pushing the boundaries," he says with confidence. "There's a synthesis of styles, words and images that I believe makes *Kabuki* something different."

Big talk. But *Kabuki*, approaching issue #14 from Caliber Press, is definitely walking the walk.

Set in a near future Japan, the book's title character—a member of a secret government group called The Noh—walks a delicate and often dangerous line between crime and politics.

"This is a world where the government and the older crime lords have agreed to a kind of status quo that allows everybody to go about their business," explains Mack, whose creation has already been the recipient of Eisner and Harvey award nominations. "But problems tend to arise when younger crime lords want to get their piece of the pie and start making trouble. That's when The Noh and Kabuki come in."

Kabuki, when not dealing with spies and criminal syndicates, also must deal with a troubled past that includes her ancestors' involvement in World War II's infamous comfort stations (where women were forced against their will to perform sexual acts with Japanese soldiers) and her mixed Japanese-Inu heritage. Historically accurate, *Kabuki* offers glimpses of real world history which, in the case of the Inu, focus on how they were driven from their land by the arrival of the Japanese centuries ago. Told largely from Kabuki's perspective, this government agent's adventures regularly have her meeting and crossing paths with other Noh agents such as Scareb, Ice, Tiger Lilly and Siamese.

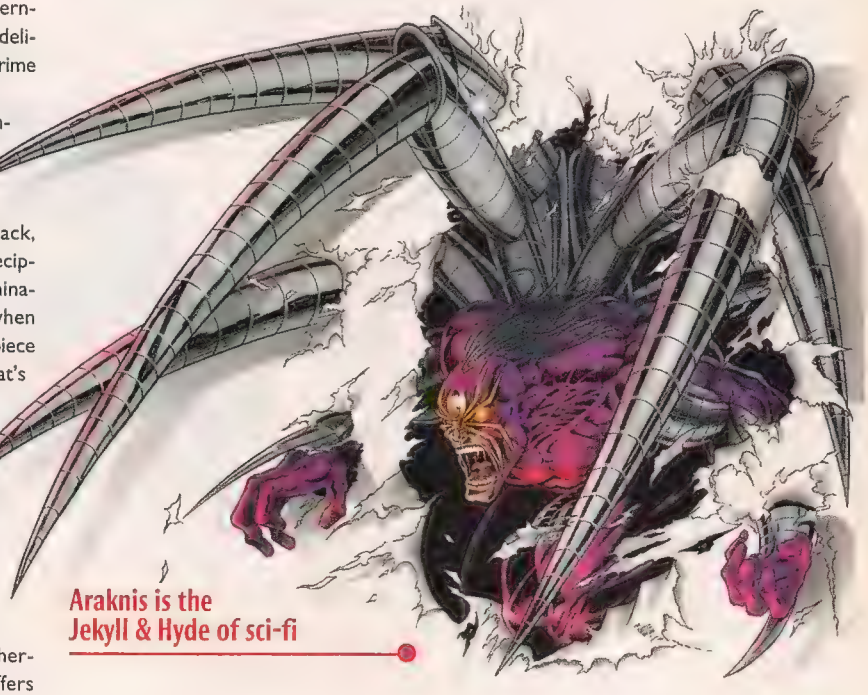
Kabuki began life in early 1994 with a couple of one-shots. Things kicked into high gear in mid '94 when the six-issue mini-series *Circle of Blood* gave us chunks of back-story, as well as Kabuki's brush with a new crime operative who turned out to be her father. The *Kabuki Color Special* and another one-shot entitled *Kabuki: Dreams of the Dead* are currently in the shops, priming fans for September's *Skin Deep* mini-series in which Kabuki becomes a renegade agent and is hunted by fellow agents with explicit orders to bring her back dead or...dead!

The genesis of *Kabuki* stems from Mack's total immersion in Japanese culture, language and lifestyle, which included spending some time at a Hong Kong based firm as a designer. "I funneled all those influences, along with my own ideas about adventure and spies and stuff like that. I came up with what I thought the perfect comic book would be for somebody like me. Even if I hadn't created it, Kabuki is something I would lay my money down for."

Araknis

If you've been a loyal follower of Image's *Savage Dragon*, you might recall getting your first look at Araknis in a single panel in issue #10. The appearance was courtesy of a first-place finish by creators Mike and Mario Ortiz and Gene Jimenez in an annual drawing contest sponsored by Erik Larsen. But there's more to this demon from another dimension than a mere cameo. Since July 1995, this Jekyll-and-Hyde odyssey featuring demons, possession and an otherworldly threat to mankind has been delivering some heavyweight goods to its readers. *Araknis* is a deeply dark and disturbing psychological war of wills where the good guy, in a very real sense, is also the bad guy.

Confused? Don't be. Because *Araknis* will make perfect sense.



Araknis is the Jekyll & Hyde of sci-fi

TaoLand combines Kung-fu and Norse mythology set in a world dominated by animals

Published by Mushroom Comics, with issue #3 hitting stores this August, *Araknis* tells the story of John Blackwell, a physicist who is experimenting with a dimensional travel device. Unbeknownst to Blackwell, Cryptus and his Storm Legions—a group of evil demons from another dimension—have been tampering with his device as a means of gaining entry into our world.

Consequently, the device goes bonkers and Blackwell is thrust into this demon-infested world and into the clutches of a particularly vile creature called the T'Rokan (a.k.a. Araknis), who has the ability to possess and ultimately take over a host. And that's just what it does to Blackwell. But the takeover is far from perfect as the scientist's strong moral code and iron will have kept the demonic possession only partially successful. Adding insult to injury, Blackwell's wife Serena has also been taken over by a demon called Hell-X.

The Ortiz brothers, often both speaking at the same time, put it simply: "Blackwell is carrying a full load." That load includes his attempts to deal with the growing evil of Araknis that dwells within him, Cryptus and his demons' attempted takeover of Earth and Hell-X's possession of his wife. "Plus, Blackwell's got all that guilt from having created the device that triggered all the problems in the first place," offers Mario. It's a constant Jekyll-and-Hyde struggle on a number of action-packed and emotional fronts as Araknis progressively gains more control, while a sinister government involvement in the mess adds even more fuel to the already-seething fire.

Jimenez offers that the *Araknis* landscape is not just a literal trip in which good guy chases bad guy and has a lot of angst. "Blackwell meets a lot of different characters along the way. Some impact his life and some are just people who pass in the night. And there's also a heavy biblical, apocalyptic undertone to the story." That tone mainly comes from the fact that the Ortiz brothers are big readers of the Bible's Book of Revelations.

The creators of *Araknis*, which ships every six weeks or so, are pretty confident that their spidery demon and its human host have the legs for a lengthy run. "Our goal is to get 500 issues out of this," crows Mario. "But who knows? Now maybe it will be 1000."

And Jimenez thinks he knows why that goal is reachable: "We'd like to think that people are going to be drawn to the character as well as the predicament. Yeah, this guy's got problems...but they're interesting problems."

TaoLand

Jeff Amano's key to creating *TaoLand* was simple. Combine his fondness for the art of Kung-fu (he's a black belt) with his mania for the mythology of the Marvel comic book character Thor. "What I came up with was an Asian Thor," he says. *TaoLand* (pronounced Dow-Land) began life as a black-and-white eight-pager in July '95 and was followed in August by a 16-page dual-tone book. A 24-page dual-tone book followed in September, while last February ushered in a 24-page color book. Issue #5, shipping in October from Sumitek, raises the ante with a color 48-pager. All have been distinguished by a cutting-edge illustration process that Amano calls "computer painting."

"Basically, what I do is pencil the pages, scan them into the computer and paint them with a digital brush," he explains. "It's a difficult process. It takes about two days to do one page, which is why *TaoLand* is currently a quarterly book."

TaoLand is also a family affair, literally. Amano handles the creative front, his wife deals with sales and miscellaneous business affairs, and his children pitch in on copy editing and story suggestions. "I wanted to control the production values, which is why I decided to do it myself. *TaoLand* is a labor of love for me."

The story takes place in the Age of Animals, a mythical period of time before the coming of the human race which is dominated by Animal Gods. The time has come for the animals to hand over the dominion of the Earth to the up-and-coming human race, and they will help guide and protect the humans during the transition. Problems arise, however, when some of the animal warlords, led by the Dragon Warlord Yaw-Kuai, decide not to hand over their power—at least not without a fight! And this fight includes a

Gina, one of the adventurous sisters of Fred Perry's *Gold Digger*

bizarre animal-on-human practice called The Ritual Feeding in which human individuality is lost to the animals.

The battle is joined by Yingpeng, the Baboon Warlord who has risked all to side with the humans, Ien, The Warrior Dancer, and Shaohai, The Acrobat. *TaoLand* is a compilation of styles: mystical martial arts action, philosophy, supernatural intrigue and a real sense of dark destiny made all the more dramatic by illustrations that practically leap off the page. The bond between Yingpeng and his human allies is both strong and believable. You feel for this creature that has chosen to cross a line which it can never cross back over. And when a battle with Lienquan, the Crocodile Warlord, results in Yingpeng being transformed into a very mortal baboon, the tension of what the future may bring is heightened all the more.

"What *TaoLand* is, is actually a little difficult to explain," says Amano, whose efforts have caught the eye and support of veteran artist Gene Colan. "People have called it everything from Jackie Chan meets 'Planet of the Apes' to Conan the Barbarian by way of 'The Jungle Book.' For me, I guess it's about an ancient time, a war and the dawning of a new world."

Gold Digger

Fred Perry had just returned from a tour of duty in Desert Storm. "After all that heavy action, I wanted to do something that would help me unwind and have fun with. Something with an 'Indiana Jones' feel to it and something with a little bit of cheesecake. That's when it all came together."

Gold Digger, the madcap adventures of treasure-hunting sisters, Gina and Brittany, and their wild adventures in search of booty originally began life as a series of short stories in Antarctic Press' anthology magazine *Mangazine* in 1989. The adventures continued in a 1992 mini-series before beginning its run as a regular bimonthly series in 1993. Now going on issue #31 through Antarctic Press, *Gold Digger* is slowly gaining attention for jumping off the pages in an American Manga style.

This is far from a straight-forward adventure though. While Gina is a seemingly normal Ph.D. archaeologist, her sister Brittany is a shape-shifting cheetah creature. The breech in genetics might have something to do with the fact that their parents, Theodore and Julia, are a wizard and a witch from another dimension. Also along for these far-reaching and, according to editor Herb Mallette, "often gonzo" tales are another shape-shifter named Genn, a third sister named Brianna whose genetics are equal parts Gina and Brittany, a rival treasure hunter named Penny Pinscher, Gina's off-and-on love interest Ryan, and a pilot named Ace.

The *Gold Digger* odyssey has been as unpredictable as its cast of characters. Our intrepid explorers have been attacked by Leprechauns after stealing their treasure. They've battled dragons, locked horns with Gina's grandfather who's been corrupted by black magic, been trapped in another dimension because of the antics of a time-traveling dog, and been caught in the middle of a war between clans of werewolves and were-cheetahs. The explorers also regularly make use of a place called the Library of Time, whose books open up into countless other dimensions.

For Fred Perry, the war is over. For *Gold Digger*, the oddball fun and wacky adventure is a thrill ride that may never end.

Akiko

There's a high level of adventure and the stories tend to occasionally get dark and fierce. But, if you're thinking of *Akiko* as the latest in a long assembly line of Bad Girls, guess again.

Akiko, published monthly by Sirius Entertainment, is the story of a 4th grade Earth girl named Akiko who's whisked off to the planet Smoo. There, she helps search for the missing Prince of Smoo who was kidnapped by the evil Queen Aliarelapor.

"I try to think of this as being like 'Calvin and Hobbs,'" declares *Akiko* creator Mark Crilley. "It's harmless fun for the kids, and the adults can get something out of it as well."

Akiko has been described as a cross between "Star Wars" and "The Wizard of Oz"

Ever the realist, Sirius editor Rob Horan concedes that *Akiko*, currently heading into its sixth issue, is "a tough sell." But he makes a strong case for the book which first saw life as a one-shot last September. "It's a classic adventure. Anyone who picks it up won't be able to put it down. It's like *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and 'The Wizard of Oz' all wrapped up in 'Star Wars.' It's one of those books that you don't see a lot of anymore."

While on her mission to rescue and ultimately marry the Prince of Smoo, *Akiko* has gathered a ragtag crew of fellow travelers. They include an adventurer named Spuckler, a bookworm named Mr. Beeba, a robot named Gax and a mysterious alien being called Poog. The adventures, as you might imagine, are largely character driven and often revolve around the bickering of Spuckler and Mr. Beeba. But *Akiko* certainly doesn't lack good old-fashioned high adventure. In issue #2, *Akiko* and company are kidnapped by sky pirates and forced into a fight to the death against a giant robot and an alien creature called a Jagasaur. Then there's always the queen and her minions constantly causing trouble—as are the various inhabitants of the planet. But rest assured, there's no graphic violence and no scantily clad women—just a story that always ends up making perfect sense.

Akiko was originally created by Crilley, a school teacher, while teaching English to students in Japan. "I would do a page a week of the Akiko story and bring it to class each week. It was a serialized adventure. They were really into it. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't thinking about it as a comic book. Eventually, I made up a list of independents and sent the Akiko story out. Sirius was interested."

And in its relatively short existence, Akiko has struck gold. The book's already received a nomination for the coveted Eisner award and Universal Pictures has optioned it for a possible animated TV series.

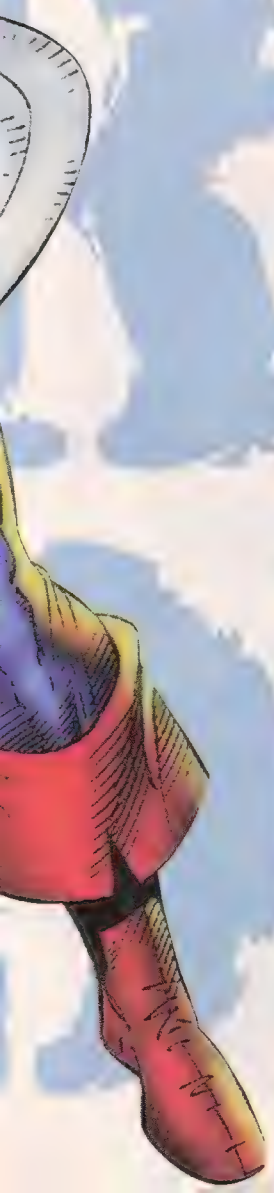
Akiko is proof positive that nice books don't have to finish last.

Marc Shapiro, who interviewed Marc Silvestri this issue, blows all his loose change in superball vending machines.

NEW WORLD ORDER

JIM LEE AND ROB LIEFELD RECREATE THE MARVEL UNIVERSE IN THEIR OWN IMAGE

By Craig Shutt



Captain America is a steelworker that doesn't know he's Cap. The Fantastic Four are outlaws. The Avengers, agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.

Welcome to the new Marvel Universe.

Fans have been anxiously awaiting the September relaunch ever since Marvel announced last December that Image artists Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld would be handling its core characters and re-creating them from ground zero. Lee flexes his muscles on *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man* while Liefeld concentrates on *Captain America* and *Avengers*.

Lee and Liefeld are now set to reveal their anticipated plans over the course of the next year for the four series—which have thus far been touted as being set in a different universe from the one regular readers of the Marvel Universe know.

"Heroes Reborn," the titles' project name, is to be kicked off by the massive "Onslaught" crossover story ending in August. "The 'Onslaught' crossover leads into a clean slate for Rob and me," explains Lee. "Our books are an organic outgrowth of that event, which drops a curtain onto the Marvel Universe. Is this a pocket universe or a different beginning that evolves into the Marvel Universe that we know today? You'll have to come along and find out."

THE SET-UP

The books will have interconnecting elements, the creators say. Those begin with the premise that this Earth has had no heroes in many years, ever since Captain America disappeared long ago, says Liefeld. "Jim and I agreed from day one that the first night that Rogers becomes Captain America again is the same night the Fantastic Four are bombarded with cosmic rays," he notes. "That combination, that synergy, creates the Marvel Universe."

Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D. (Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-enforcement Division) play pivotal roles. "When Captain America returns, the world's response is amazing," Liefeld says. "Everyone goes nuts." To exploit that, S.H.I.E.L.D. forms a group of superpeople around Cap. Thus is born the Avengers.

S.H.I.E.L.D. also extricates Reed Richards, Sue Storm, Johnny Storm and Ben Grimm from their irradiated capsule when it returns to Earth, intending to arrest them. But the four are instead needed to subdue Namor the Sub-Mariner, who threatens to conquer the surface world. When the dust settles, the FF are too visible to keep under wraps. Fury grudgingly agrees to an uneasy alliance and lets them operate on their own from the Baxter Building.

Sound familiar? Yes and no, which is just the way the creators want it. "Captain America has been around for a long time and developed a lot of baggage, both good and bad," explains Liefeld. "We have to ensure that the young kids are enjoying these characters, not just the 28-year-olds like me. That means giving them facelifts from time to time and jump-starting the legends."

Lee agrees, "My stories won't be tied to the past, but the feel and tone of the stories and characters definitely will be tied to their heritage." That means retaining what works, he stresses. "One of Marvel's biggest mistakes was putting Daredevil into armor. The characters' look defines Marvel; that's [the company's] strength, and they should have played it up, not changed it."

To make sure the characters look as dynamic as possible, the two creators have brought along a number of their studios' artists, with Liefeld throwing in regular Extreme penciler Chap Yaep (*Team Youngblood*) and inkers Jonathan Sibal (*Youngblood*) and Marlo Alquiza (*Prophet*), and Lee bringing WildStorm artist Whilce Portacio (*WetWorks*) and inker Scott Williams (*WildC.A.T.s*). A few fan-favorite writers are on the case as well.

Here's a peek at what lies ahead in this alternate Marvel Universe:

FANTASTIC FOUR

WRITERS: JIM LEE & BRANDON CHOI
ARTISTS: JIM LEE & SCOTT WILLIAMS

The same night that Captain America returns, at the Storm Foundation in California, four figures sneak aboard a rocket ship in an effort to learn why they've been denied permission to finish a key experiment dealing with a cosmic disruption. After shooting into space, they are barraged with cosmic rays. That exposure changes them—and their world—forever.

The rebooted Fantastic Four will return to their younger, less-experienced days. "I want to reflect the characters' early years," says Lee. "Over the years, the FF became more mature, not only in age, but also personality and experience. I want to get back to the raw essence of who they are." Adds co-writer Brandon Choi (*Gen*^{13}), "We want to reset the clock for these characters and take the first 10 issues of the original series and weave those elements into a new tapestry."

The story begins with Reed Richards, a brilliant scientist, and his best friend, pilot Ben Grimm, working together at the Storm Foundation on a rocket that will examine a cosmic anomaly. As they near completion, their security clearances are yanked. Shocked and frustrated, they ask two foundation executives to help breach security locks. The execs are Reed's girlfriend, Sue, and her young brother, Johnny, the children of foundation owner Franklin Storm. To get to the bottom of things, the four rocket into space in a ship with less shielding than the one Reed and Ben were completing.

"Reed senses there's an evil conspiracy afoot," Lee explains. "When Sue and Johnny agree to help, they make a pact that they're all in this together. Their original origin was great for the time, but I wanted it to be more of a thriller and a mystery." The team's suspicions lead to the new Fantastic Four leaving the Storm Foundation, he adds. "How they wind up in the Baxter Building is part of the conspiracy that's tied to their origin."

Lee and Choi plan to reemphasize the team's role as adventurers into the unknown, letting them

travel the globe uncovering weird phenomena. "We're going to explore deeper into the areas that [FF creators] Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created early on," says Choi. "But we'll stay on the same pathways." That means classic supervillains will appear too, including the Mole Man and Namor to start off. You just know Doctor Doom is waiting in the wings.

The key relationships will remain intact, Choi notes. "The characters will be the same recognizable people, but with a '90s slant," he promises. "It'll only be the trappings that change." Reed and Sue will be lovers, but the young and privileged Sue will be intrigued by the misunderstood Namor, adds Lee. "She'll definitely have more backbone and be more self-sufficient than she was in the beginning."

The Thing and Human Torch will retain their antagonism toward each other too. "That's a classic relationship," he says. "It'll all be there, but the way they express their rivalry will be different." Johnny, he notes, will be "younger, about 20, and more naïve than he is now. He's got lots of interesting personality quirks."

The book, like the others, will acknowledge the rest of the Lee/Liefeld universe, Lee adds. "When Namor attacks, all of the new heroes will get involved. I expect to be drawing the Avengers in issues #2 and #3."

CAPTAIN AMERICA

WRITERS: ROB LIEFELD & JEPH LOEB
ARTISTS: ROB LIEFELD & JONATHAN SIBAL

Steelworker Steve Rogers has carved out a cozy life in Pittsburgh, with his beautiful wife and child. Then one day, a grungy old man sidles up to him and murmurs, "I know who you are. And until you return, the darkness will remain." Rogers dismisses the guy as a nut. But soon his life begins to unravel, as he remembers he once had another identity. And then, something happens that brings everything back into focus with a bang, culminating with Rogers' return as Captain America.

"I've had a story about Cap I've always wanted to tell," explains Liefeld. "This is my chance to do it." The underlying theme keys into why Captain America is so vital today. "From where I sit, America is a scary place," he relates. "I want to express that we'd all be better off if there were someone like Captain America. He represents the superhero we've all gotten away from writing. He's not dark, he's not paid to do what he does; he does it to right wrongs, defend people and uphold liberty and justice."

He'll have help, in the form of a teenage girl who picks up the mantle of Bucky and a revitalized Falcon, a top-gun fighter pilot who creates an initially uneasy alliance with Cap. "In the beginning, his relationship with Cap is tumultuous at best," Liefeld says, "but they develop a kind of love-hate relationship, like Danny Glover and Mel Gibson in the 'Lethal Weapon' movies."

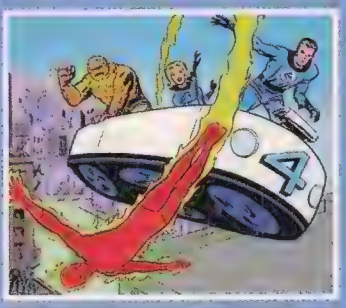
Liefeld himself will have help in the form of scripter Jeph Loeb (*X-Force*), who replaces writer Chuck Dixon on the title (see "Wizard News").

FANTASTIC FOUR

CIRCA: 1961

Creative Team: Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

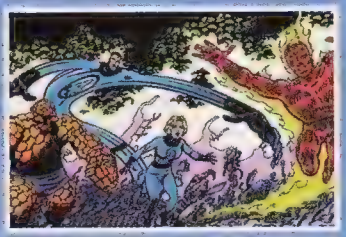
The Skinny: Racing to become the first people in outer space, a team of four close friends gets bombarded by cosmic rays and becomes a superteam of adventurers, the Fantastic Four. Their illegal actions have no repercussions.



CIRCA: 1983

Creative Team: John Byrne (writer/artist)

The Skinny: Still a team of four close friends, the Fantastic Four continue to find adventures to keep them busy.



CIRCA: 1996

Creative Team: Jim Lee, Brandon Choi and Scott Williams

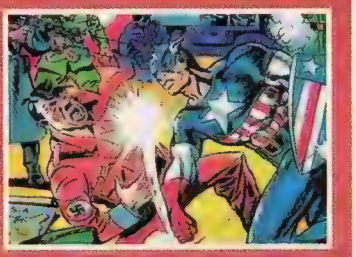
The Skinny: Trying to figure out why their access to their space experiment has been cut, a team of four close friends rockets into space and gets bombarded by cosmic rays to become the superteam the Fantastic Four. Because of their illegal actions, S.H.I.E.L.D. keeps a watchful eye on them.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

CIRCA: 1940

Creative Team: Joe Simon and Jack Kirby

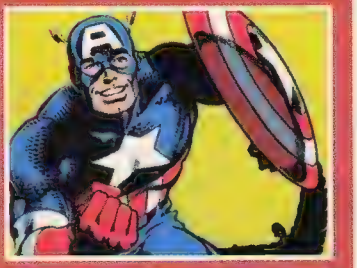
The Skinny: Steve Rogers is injected with an experimental serum, transforming him into America's super-soldier to fight Nazis in World War II.



CIRCA: 1980

Creative Team: Roger Stern, John Byrne and Joe Rubinstein

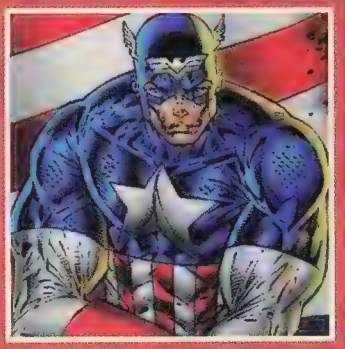
The Skinny: Steve Rogers, revived years earlier after being in suspended animation since the end of World War II, continues his fight against injustice as Captain America.



CIRCA: 1996

Creative Team: Rob Liefeld, Jeph Loeb and Jonathan Sibal

The Skinny: Kept young by a super-soldier serum, steelworker and family man Steve Rogers has been an amnesiac since the end of World War II and becomes Cap again when his memory returns.



"This is Rob's show," Loeb says of his scripting duties. "It always was Rob's show—and I think that's great. He has a very specific vision of what he's doing, and I perceive this experience as Rob being the director, Captain America the star and I'm the screenwriter. My job as the screenwriter is to execute the director's vision as best I can."

Part of Cap's adventures will focus on him unraveling how he got to where he is, resolving the dilemmas his new life creates, and dealing with the America that's resulted in part from him being away. "We have a lot of fun tearing away at his life and explaining how he got to be in the place he is," Liefeld says. "Our approach to the series is going to be a combination of Tom Clancy ['Patriot Games'] and Philip K. Dick ['Blade Runner'], with our love of old Marvel Comics thrown in."

The opening four-issue arc deals with an America threatening to erupt into a new Civil War. The catalyst for that comes from the master plan of Cap's arch-foe, the Red Skull. He is revived from a cryogenic state by Masterman, a foot soldier in the Skull's organization who during the war drank a super-serum similar to Rogers' own. Baron Zemo will also be showing up, along with other classic supervillains. To help Cap combat this villainy, S.H.I.E.L.D. and Nick Fury will play pivotal roles, with Cap operating as a sometime-agent of the organization.

Liefeld realizes he's following a strong act in writer Mark Waid and artist Ron Garney, who took over Captain America after Liefeld and Lee's negotiations with Marvel began. "They've done a great job," Liefeld says. "They've helped heal Cap, and I hope I can continue the healing process. But this is an opportunity to launch him from Day One and make him fresh for the young kids out there."

AVENGERS

WRITERS: ROB LIEFELD & JIM VALENTINO
ARTISTS: ROB LIEFELD, CHAP YAEP, JONATHAN SIBAL & MARLO ALQUIZA

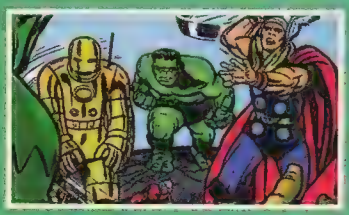
"*Avengers* is my favorite book from childhood," Liefeld enthuses. "Back then, it was a kick-ass book—nobody could touch those guys. But I think it lost that sense of grandeur and glory in the last 10 years."

AVENGERS

CIRCA: 1963

Creative Team: Stan Lee and Jack Kirby

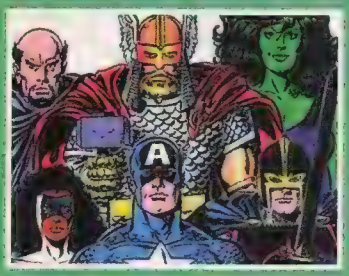
The Skinny: Iron Man, Thor, Ant-Man, Wasp and the Hulk band together to stop the threat of Loki.



CIRCA: 1987

Creative Team: Roger Stern, John Buscema and Tom Palmer

The Skinny: Captain America, Thor, Captain Marvel, the Black Knight, Dr. Druid and She-Hulk continue the good fight to stop threats everywhere.



CIRCA: 1996

Creative Team: Rob Liefeld, Jim Valentino, Chap Yaep, Jonathan Sibal and Marlo Alquiza

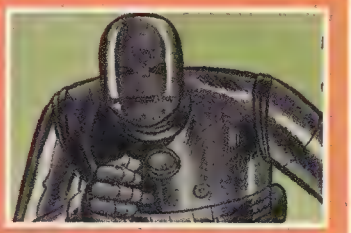
The Skinny: S.H.I.E.L.D. organizes a supergroup consisting of Thor, the Vision, Scarlet Witch, Hawkeye, Hellcat and the Swordsman to support the return of Captain America, their eventual leader.

IRON MAN

CIRCA: 1962

Creative Team: Stan Lee and Don Heck

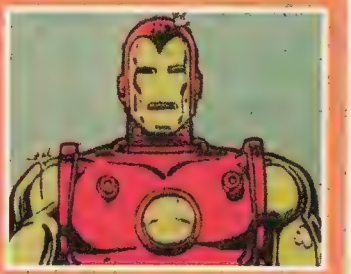
The Skinny: Millionaire industrialist Tony Stark designs and dons a suit of armor to keep his heart beating as well as protect the innocent.



CIRCA: 1981

Creative Team: David Michelinie, John Romita Jr. and Bob Layton

The Skinny: Millionaire industrialist Tony Stark, no longer struggling with a heart problem, designs and dons a suit of armor to protect the innocent.



CIRCA: 1996

Creative Team: Jim Lee, Scott Lobdell, Whilce Portacio and Scott Williams

The Skinny: Millionaire industrialist Tony Stark designs and dons a suit of armor to keep his heart beating as well as protect the innocent.

To return to that state, he and co-writer Jim Valentino have crafted a lineup that features Thor, the Vision, Scarlet Witch, Hawkeye, Hellcat and the Swordsman, led by Captain America. "Cap personifies the Avengers," says Valentino (the creator of Image's ShadowHawk). He and Liefeld agreed almost completely about the rest of the lineup, too, he adds. "I kinda balked at using the Swordsman," Valentino admits. "I thought he'd take away from Hawkeye. But I found an angle that makes him work."

Some heroes will be revamped more than others, but most will hearken back to earlier days. Both writers, for instance, express distaste over Thor's current direction. "Thor's going back to the thees and thous of Shakespeare's English—which makes no sense for a Norse Thunder God," laughs Valentino. He intends to emphasize that heritage. "Vikings are lusty and worship war gods, and that's how I'm going to play Thor," he says. "He finds the 20th century to be a mysterious place. All he wants is a good fight, a good beer and a good woman, not necessarily in that order."

The Scarlet Witch will be the most powerful member—or at least she'll have that potential, says Liefeld. "She's my favorite character in the book." A member of an X-Files-like division of S.H.I.E.L.D., she joins the Avengers at S.H.I.E.L.D.'s direction so they can gauge her true power. But there's more to her than meets the eye, the writers note. First, her name is Wanda Harkness, an orphan left on the doorstep of Agatha Harkness (the witch/nanny to young Franklin Richards in the earlier Marvel Universe). Second, someone in the book—not Magneto or the Whizzer—thinks Wanda is their daughter. "It's a super bombshell," Valentino promises. "It'll floor everyone, and the connection has always been there. I'm shocked no one has seen it before."

The Vision remains familiar in look and powers, Valentino says. "We'll be dropping some hints about his origin, and I think it'll please the older fans." The Vision's synthezoid background will be kept prominent through his speech patterns, he says. "He's a wonderful character. He's one of those guys that's a perennial Avenger."

Hawkeye receives an updated costume, but his personality remains intact, Valentino says. "He's acerbic, with a huge chip on his shoulder, but he's a 100-percent team player. He's a regular guy who thinks he's good enough to stand beside living legends and gods, and it's really important to him that he be accepted as an equal." Hawkeye thinks he's so equal, in fact, that he wants to lead the team.

The first issue opens with the S.H.I.E.L.D.-inspired team already formed (in *Captain America* #1). "Awaken the Thunder" leads the group to a cave in Norway, where they battle Loki to free Thor, who then joins up. Iron Man joins in issue #6, Valentino adds. Also playing a key role throughout the series will be the Enchantress, who exploits her power of seduction. Hank Pym appears as the Avengers' live-in scientist, who'll be visited often by his fiancée, Janet Van Dyne. She in turn has a major impact on Wanda's outlook.

The interweaving of all four books can be seen in the Hulk's appearance in *Avengers* #4, adds Liefeld. "I've been waiting to draw the Hulk for 10 years. He's such a great visual and one of the first characters I loved. Jim [Lee] has to share him."

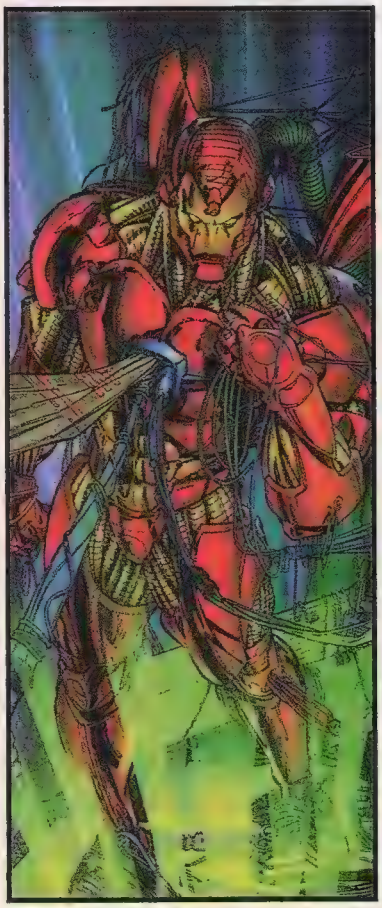
Familiar villains will be returning too, Valentino promises. Issue #2, for instance, is called, "The Man Who Would Be Kang." And, he hints, there's probably something dire in store for Pym's robotic lab assistants, called Ultrons. Most stories will be single-issue tales, he stresses. "I think the move away from that is why the comics industry has lost so many casual readers."

IRON MAN

WRITERS: JIM LEE & SCOTT LOBDELL
ARTISTS: WHILCE PORTACIO & SCOTT WILLIAMS

Issue #1 kicks off with a bang, detailing the origins of both Iron Man and his co-star, the Hulk. "At heart, their stories are the same," says co-writer Scott Lobdell (*Uncanny X-Men*, *Generation X*). Millionaire industrialist Tony Stark has lost his way in the world of corporate finance running Stark International, he explains, while Bruce Banner has become immersed in the scientific world. Although best friends, they have little time for other human attachments. At least, that's true until one act of selflessness on each man's part dramatically changes his world.

"I find it fascinating that these are two damaged people who essentially are trapped by their own destinies," Lobdell says. Stark is confined by great technology due to a heart problem that relies upon his armor, while Banner becomes a force of nature. "They provide the ultimate battle of technology versus nature. You couldn't ask for two more interesting characters that can bounce off each other."



Although friends in their civilian guises, they won't know each other's secret, he adds. "I loved the idea of secret identities, and I think something was lost as more people learned who they were," he says. Tony finally reveals his identity to someone in issue #3, as he nears death from a terrible battle. Unfortunately, the person he entrusts is secretary Pepper Potts—and Stark fired her in issue #1, leaving her with few resources to aid her stricken former boss.

And the Hulk connections don't end with Banner. While Rick Jones isn't slated to appear at all, Gen. Thunderbolt Ross will be around, and his daughter Betty Ross plays a key role, too, only she'll be called Liz this time. She serves as head of security for Stark's company and has the hots for her boss. She confides her love to Banner—which causes problems, since Banner's in love with Liz himself. The triangle adds another dimension when Stark appoints Iron Man to be his bodyguard, making Liz jealous of Shell-head's intimate access. Lobdell says, "It returns the series to those situations where things were always really difficult for the characters personally."

THE CREATORS acknowledge they're stepping into big shoes by restarting these characters. Fair assessment or not, Lee and Liefeld are the Stan Lee and Jack Kirby of the '90s, and they hope to reach their lofty goal of balancing the long heritage with a contemporary look.

"No one can replace Stan and Jack, and I'm definitely not a new version of them," Liefeld says. "This is a fresh take on their classic characters, something no one has ever done before, so it's a little intimidating. But I feel strongly that what we're doing will have legs and that readers will respond to it. I think what will come through is both my and Jim's love for the characters and our healthy respect for what's gone on in the past, only refitted for a new generation."

"The fact that 30 years later, we can still find things to explore about these characters is a real tribute to the genius of [the original creators]," says Lobdell.

Valentino agrees. "The best way to honor Stan and Jack is not to imitate them, but to take a different direction," he says. "They put a new spin on the idea of superheroes, and that's what we hope to do too. We know we can never measure up to them, but we hope to put our best foot forward." W

Craig Shutt, who peeked at Lee and Liefeld's sketchbooks on this project last issue, was shocked—shocked!—to learn we don't have Rick Jones to kick around anymore.

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Wizard casts the Superman movie!

Casting call

"Up, up and away!"

With that whole "Death of Superman" story, the Man of Steel is ready to take off and have another go at a big-budget movie.

While each of Superman's past movies may have been cool (actually, make that just the first two), we feel it's time for a true blockbuster film with high-caliber stars and killer special effects. Since it would definitely feature all the major players in Supes' family, here's our take on the cast that'll help make this Supermovie the best one yet.

SUPERMAN/ CLARK KENT

Rob Estes, formerly of TV's "Silk Stalkings," has a striking look about him, without losing that all-American innocence. Adding that to his chiseled features makes him a good pick for the Man of Steel.

By a bunch of Wizard staffers

All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

LOIS LANE

Kim Delaney has proven on "NYPD Blue" that she has a feisty attitude similar to that of the *Daily Planet* reporter. And hey, it don't hurt that she looks like her too!

PERRY WHITE

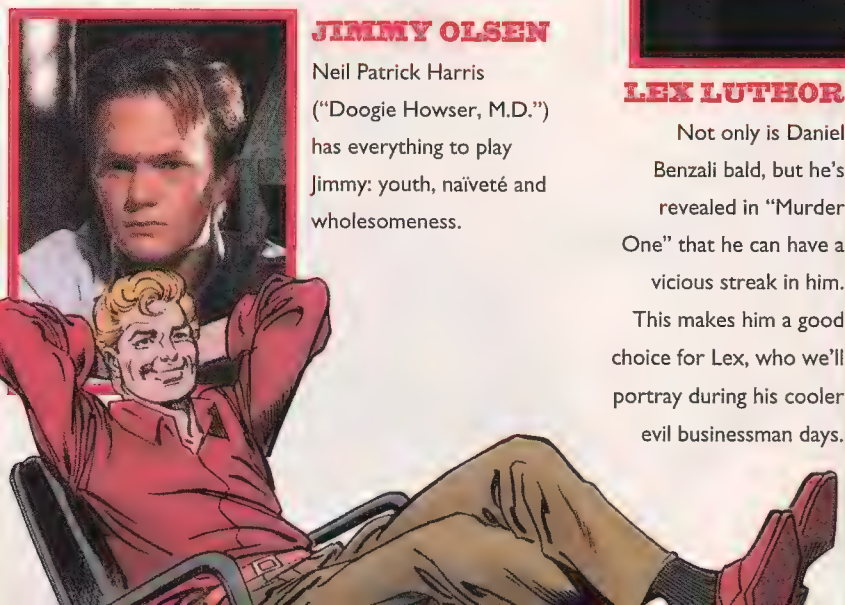
Brian Dennehy ("F/X," "Presumed Innocent") has that honest gruffness to his personality that makes him a good candidate for the *Planet*'s editor-in-chief.

LANA LANG

Having an honest look to her, Melissa Gilbert ("Little House on the Prairie") is a perfect match for Clark Kent's high school confidante.

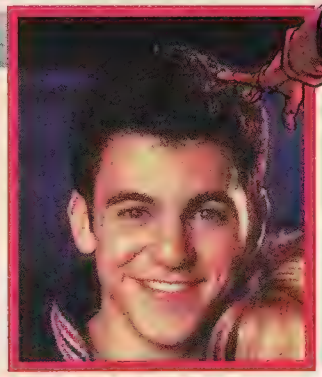
LEX LUTHOR

Not only is Daniel Benzali bald, but he's revealed in "Murder One" that he can have a vicious streak in him. This makes him a good choice for Lex, who we'll portray during his cooler evil businessman days.



JIMMY OLSEN

Neil Patrick Harris ("Doogie Howser, M.D.") has everything to play Jimmy: youth, naïveté and wholesomeness.



SUPERBOY

Okay, forget about Fred Savage's "Wonder Years" days—he's actually grown up some and looks a lot like our wiseguy teen hero. Just plop those John Lennon sunglasses on 'im and you've got "The Kid."

PA KENT

As TV's most prominent dad, John Mahoney from "Frasier" could do it here as well. Though he'd have to be a much friendlier father in this movie to be Jonathan Kent.

MA KENT

Always good to portray a caring mother, Marion Ross from TV's "Brooklyn Bridge" could play Martha Kent with no problems.

SUPERGIRL

We need a blonde bombshell for our supergal, and Jenny McCarthy (MTV's "Singled Out") certainly looks the part.

BRAINIAC

Frank Langella ("Dave," "Cutthroat Island") is perfectly evil when he wants to be. So why not have him be perfectly evil as the wicked alien genius Brainiac?

DOOMSDAY

As befits Supes' coolest villain, we'll create him through the coolest special effects studio, Industrial Light and Magic. W

Scott Lobdell Mark Silvestri

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Thanks to our readers and creators for 21 "1996 Wizard Fan Awards"
MARVEL COMICS

FIRST LOOK

ELEKTRA

MARVEL'S FEMME FATALE INTENDS TO KILL THE COMPETITION THIS FALL

"*ELEKTRA* IS THE ONE BIG MONTHLY LAUNCH THAT Marvel is doing in 1996," says editor Bobbie Chase of the title starring the sai-wielding assassin. "She is a fascinating complicated character who has never had her own major continuity in the Marvel Universe. Now it's time."

The new book will be scripted by Peter Milligan, one of the Brit super-scribes who made their U.S. reputations in the more mature world of DC Comics' Vertigo imprint. "Peter is going to take her in many new directions and really flesh her out as a major character," enthuses Chase.

A significant part of Elektra's appeal has been her deadly, often amoral approach to life's problems, and Milligan says he fully intends to pick up on that. "I am going to concentrate on the dark center which makes her who she is," he promises. "The series will pick up from the events in recent issues of *Wolverine*. Then, as it develops during the first year, she will come up against some outlandish and dangerous characters—and be tested both emotionally and physically. To be honest, I intend to see how well she copes with an almost absurd amount of pain and anguish and conflict."

Wolverine will remain a part of Elektra's life (he's in the first issue), but her adventures will, as you'd expect, be mostly concentrated in the Daredevil corner of the Marvel Universe. "I don't foresee any significant interaction between Elektra and Daredevil in the early going," says Milligan. "But Stick [Elektra's mentor] will play a very significant role starting in the first issue. Overall, the series will feature a mix of familiar characters and new ones, both friends and foes."

Art will be provided by Brazilian star Mike Deodato Jr., who made his first big impression in this country jazzing up *Wonder Woman* for DC Comics. "I want to do the same thing for *Elektra*," he says. "But I try to adapt my style to the nature of each character, so I plan to create a very dark mood to match what Peter is planning for the series. I'm very excited about this book. Elektra is the complete athlete, lean and agile...and very attractive as well. Literally, she is the perfect femme fatale." W

Jack Curtin also has a dark center, but his is stuffed with creamy nougat filling.

BY JACK CURTIN

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Elektra

WHAT?
Elektra, a new monthly scripted by Peter Milligan with art by Mike Deodato Jr.

DEBUT?
September

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Created by Frank Miller inside the pages of *Daredevil*, Elektra is a sai-wielding assassin who has died and been resurrected. Now with recent appearances in *Wolverine*, she is set to star in her own monthly title.

Mike Deodato's stunning work on the new *Elektra* series

september 1996

A Glimpse of the Future Contest

Gemini Blood

Contest

HELIX

The 21st century is here...in DC Comics' new Helix imprint. The all-new sci-fi line has lifted off with a bevy of future-oriented titles. And if you're sharp enough to understand the future, you just might be able to go there—today!

How To Play

No time machine necessary. Just check out the first two issues (uh, that'd be #1 and #2) of the following Helix titles and look for the *Wizard* T-shirt hidden somewhere in the art. Tell us which Helix title and what issue you saw it in. That's it.

The hidden future *Wizard* T-shirt could be in...

- ***Bloody Mary*—Where an assassin dressed as a nun seeks revenge on those who killed her friends. By Garth Ennis and Carlos Ezquerra.**
- ***Cyberella*—When 20-year-old Sunny Winston doesn't quite fit into the corporate-run world, the corporation strikes back. By Howard Chaykin and Don Cameron.**
- ***Gemini Blood*—Where the brilliant midget Nick takes on dual-bodied, genetically engineered assassins in San Francisco. By Christopher Hinz and Tommy Lee Edwards.**
- ***Vermillion*—Where the entire universe is one urban sprawl: the city of Vermillion. One man, Jonathan Cave, knows its secrets. By Lucius Shepard and Al Davison.**

The Prizes

Randomly selected readers who find the *Wizard* T-shirt could win...

Grand Prize (1): One reader will become a guest in the future...today, by being put on DC's advance black-and-white preview list for one year. That means you'll receive all sorts of behind-the-scenes advance sneak peeks at upcoming DC projects! Be in with the in crowd! See stuff that usually only Craig Shutt gets to see! The Grand Prize winner will also receive the Helix point-of-purchase kit, chock full of posters and other nifty neat goodies, and all Helix #1 issues shipped through October, 1996.

Second Prize (10): Ten readers will receive the Helix point-of-purchase kit and all Helix #1 issues shipped through October, 1996.

This contest is sponsored by DC Comics, a publisher with that future vision.

The Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, DC Comics and their immediate families or Jules Verne. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and answer on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Glimpse of the Future Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Let's do the time warp again! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by September 30, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on October 15, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after October 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Glimpse of the Future Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Glimpse of the Future Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is September 30, 1996. So get out those magnifying glasses!

Helix Entry Form

DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 30, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

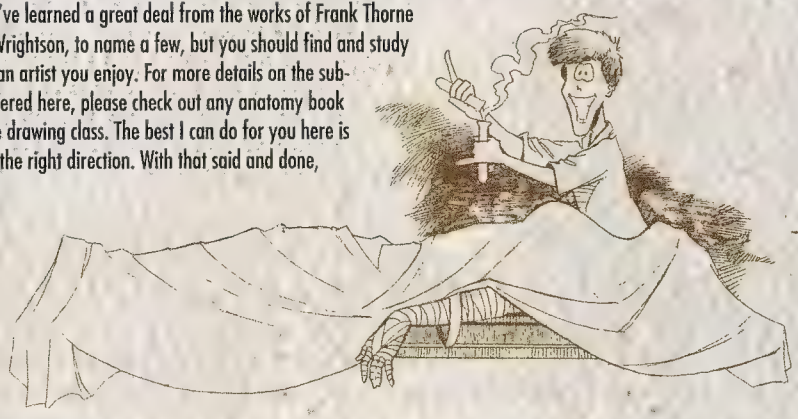
The *Wizard* T-shirt is in (title) (issue) _____

Basic Training

this month's host: Jim Balent

How to Construct a Woman

Greetings, fellow mad scientists, and welcome to this issue's "Basic Training." Today in our laboratories, we'll be learning how to construct a woman. Now, I want to state right up front that I am by no means the master of this craft. In fact, we should all learn from a number of masters so that we may hone our own skills. Personally, I've learned a great deal from the works of Frank Thorne and Bernie Wrightson, to name a few, but you should find and study the work of an artist you enjoy. For more details on the subjects I've covered here, please check out any anatomy book or take a life drawing class. The best I can do for you here is point you in the right direction. With that said and done, let us begin.

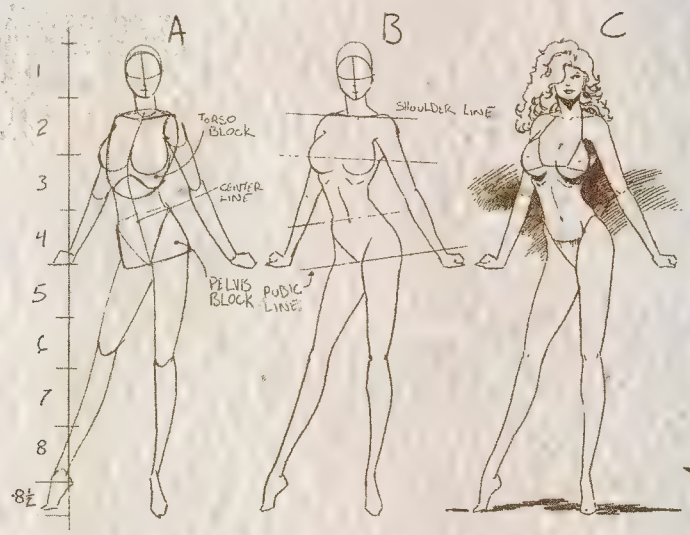


BODY BASICS

First, we need a basic blueprint or mannequin (see Diagram A). The basic comic book female is approximately eight-and-a-half heads high. Divide a vertical line into eight equal segments. Segment 1 starts at the top of the figure's head, and the bottom of the fourth segment rests on the pubic line. This should almost divide your figure in half. Segments 5 through 8 are your leg lengths, while the last half-segment is your foot length. The two main masses, the torso and pelvis blocks, are positioned on the center line in such a fashion so that our creation will have an hourglass shape and an arch to her posture.

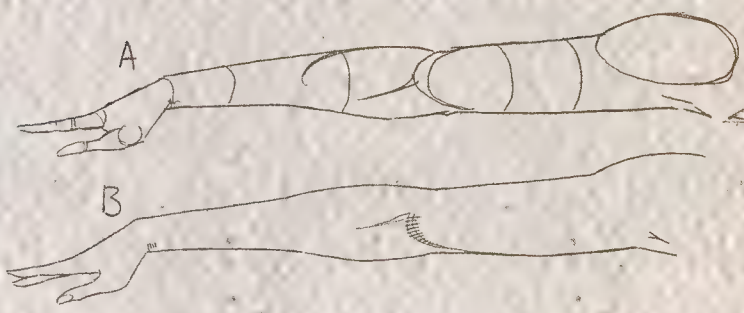
In Diagram B, it's easier to see the arch that we created by looking at the shoulder line and pubic line—they should be tilting towards each other.

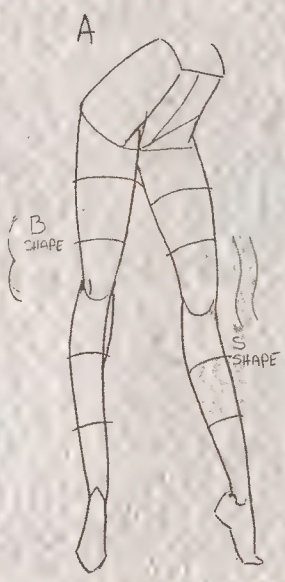
Finally, in Diagram C, sketch in some hair and a face, and you've got a good idea what your female will look like. Okay, you're right—there are a few steps in between, so to understand Diagram C better, let's break it down piece by piece.



ARMS

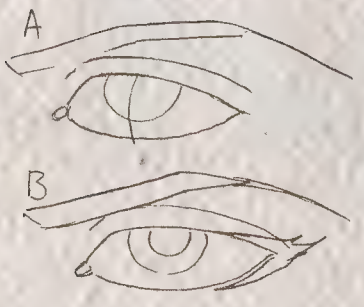
Think of the arms as tapered cylinders. Indicate muscle masses in the arms but try not to overemphasize them, for this may give them a more masculine appearance. (Yes, I know—a woman can have well defined muscles and still be feminine-looking! So I better not receive any letters from angry female bodybuilders, okay?)

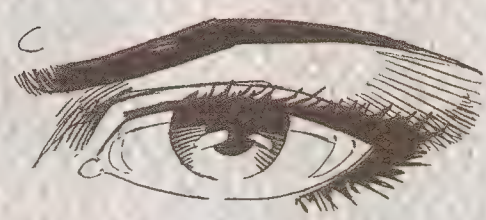




LEGS

The same rules that you used for the arms also apply here. Remember that a leg seen straight on has sort of a "B" shape to it, while a leg viewed from its side has more of an "S" shape (or a backwards "B" and "S," in both cases here).



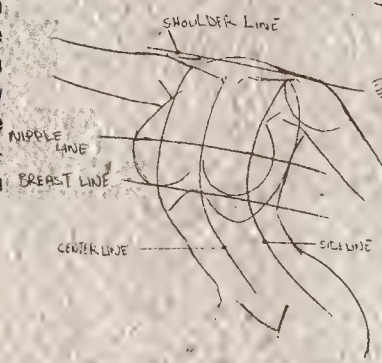


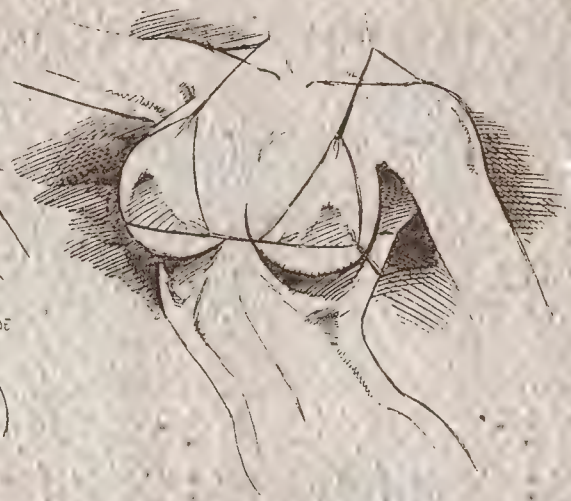
EYES

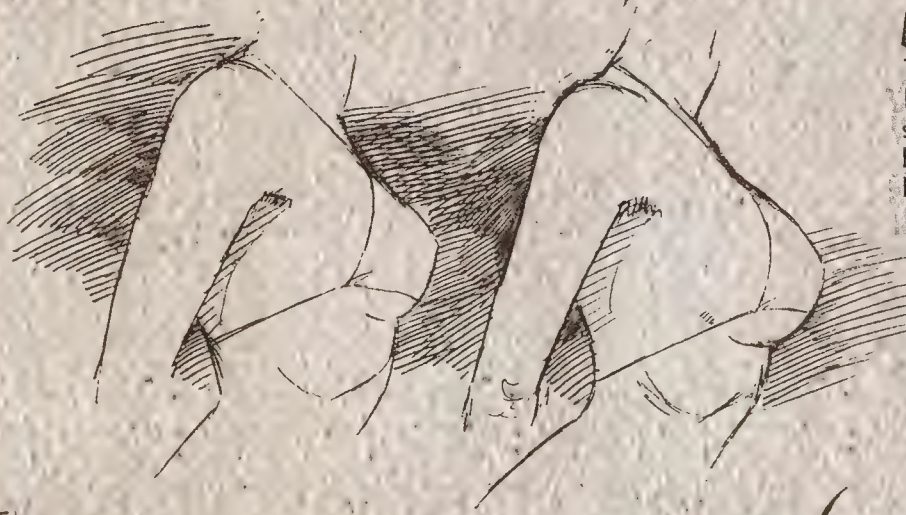
Two are usually enough. In constructing an eye, be aware of the curvature of the female eye. It is usually more slanted and catlike than a man's. Drawing more of an eyelid will give the face a softer look as well. As for eyebrows, it's really your choice, because women's eyes are feminine regardless of whether their eyebrows are thick or thin. As you can see, I prefer to draw them on the thinner side. And eyelashes should also be longer and more catlike on a female. Another trick I use is to bunch up the lashes on the corner of the eye, giving it a fuller and more catlike appearance.

TORSO

Sketch in your rib cage and find your center line. In a 3/4 view (as shown in Diagram A), you will need to add a side line. This helps orient your form in a three-dimensional surface better. Now draw in the breasts equally on either side of the center line. Remember, your "nipple line" and "breast line" should both parallel your shoulder line.

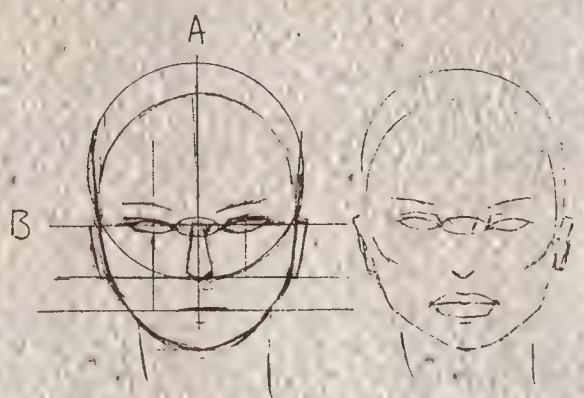






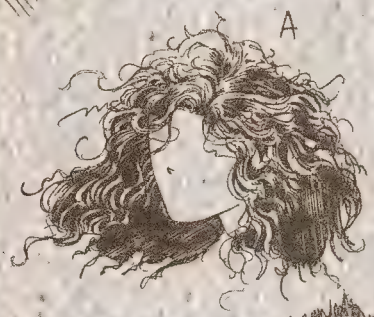
BREAST SIZE

This is a very touchy subject. We all know that breasts come in many different sizes, and one size is no better than the other. Nor do larger breasts on a character make her any less intelligent than characters with smaller breasts. (Hey, I have no breasts to speak of, but I'm still considered a "big boob" by certain people in the industry.) Anyway, design your character with any size you want. The bottom of the breast will line up at mid-biceps or lower on the arm.



THE FACE

From a straight-on view, the face is divided in half, side to side and top to bottom. Sketch in the eyes on line B; a length of one eye should separate your character's eyes (thus giving her a weird "third eye" look). The nose is placed halfway between the eye line and the chin line. The mouth is found halfway between the nose line and the chin line. And the ears are generally placed right in between the nose line and the eye line. (These measurements will vary if you desire a face with different proportions.)



HAIR

In drawing hair, keep in mind how light will bounce off the hairstyle. Type A is frizzy, which means the sunlight will catch each individual strand and give the hair that chaotic frenzied look. Type B hair lays in a unified manner, and light hitting this hair will act as one unit, giving it a more groomed look.

LET THERE BE LIFE

Okay, fellow mad scientists, now that we've pieced our female together in Frankenstein fashion, it's time to power her up! When drawing the female character in action, be sure to keep her feminine-looking. An easy way to do that is to straighten her feet and hands so that they each come to a point—this will give them a dangerous knife-like look while still keeping their sex appeal. Arching the back, legs and torso will ensure your character's femininity no matter what you have her doing, be it running, jumping or kicking through a wall. Go crazy!

And that's how we construct a woman... on paper, at least. Hopefully I've given you a pretty good starting ground to build from. Keep practicing, and before you know it, you'll find yourself drawing plenty of gorgeous women. Now if you wouldn't mind, my creation and I would like a little privacy... W

Jim Balent takes great joy in making fanboys drool with his art on DC's Catwoman *and Chaos! Comics'* Purgatori.

HOMEMADE HEROES

GRAND PRIZE

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures, and each of these talented creators will receive two 5-inch Toy Biz Marvel action figures. The Runner-Up will also get a 10-inch Toy Biz Marvel action figure, and the Grand Prize Winner rides away with all that stuff *plus* a Toy Biz Marvel model kit. Great work, people!

Thanks to the folks from Toy Biz for their generous donation of prizes. You guys are the sauce on our spaghetti!

TOY BIZ

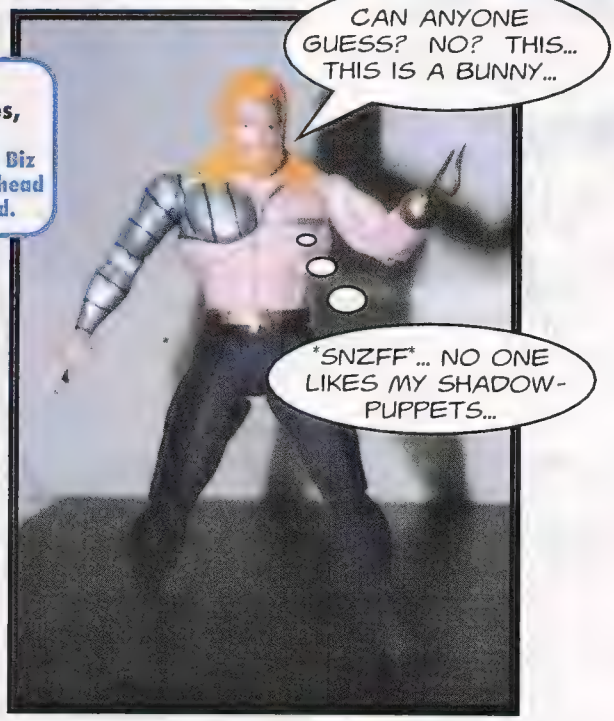
GAMVIS
Clark Bucher of Harrisburg, Pa.
Here, Clark stuck a 10-inch Toy Biz Gambit figure inside an Elvis doll's jumpsuit. This rockin' figure is funnier than Jim McLauchlin hopped up on corn chips and castor oil.

RUNNER-UP

FEMFORCE
Joseph Acevedo of Morganville, N.J.
Every single one of these lovely ladies is made from a Toy Biz Spider-Woman figure. Pretty cool, huh?

KILLER SHRIKE
David Galan of Sunland, Calif.
We have no clue what David used, but the dang figure sure looks familiar. Sigh.

JUBILEE
Rhea T. Vanarsdall of Lakeland, Fla.
Our Generation Xer was crafted from a Ripley figure from Kenner's Aliens toy line. (Remember them?)



AQUAMAN
Patrick E. Keough of Camp Greaves, Republic of Korea
Orin here was made from a 10-inch Toy Biz Weapon X body, a 10-inch Toy Biz Kane head and a real live fish hook for that hand.

BATGIRL
Michael Jaecks of Minneapolis, Minn.
Batgirl used to be an Ninja Newscaster April O'Neil figure from Playmates' Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles line. The cape was stripped from a Toy Biz Grey Gargoyle figure. Neat, eh?

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

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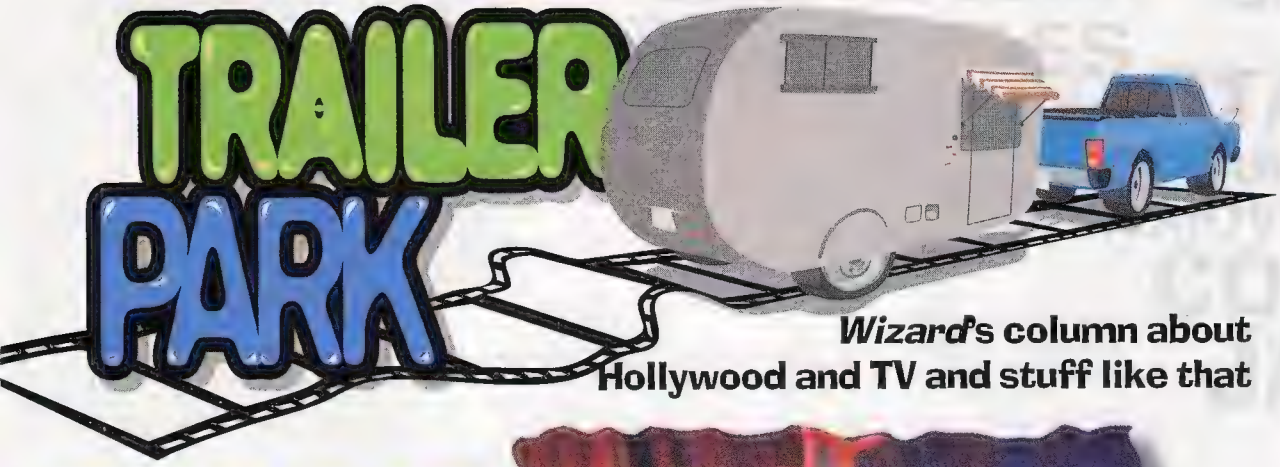


Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

'SYNDICATION X' IN '97

By Rob Allstetter

"GENERATION X" GETS SYNDICATED IN FALL '97

"Generation X" is becoming a weekly television series—but you'll have to wait a while before you see it.

New World Entertainment will produce 22 hour-long episodes of "Generation X" for the syndication market beginning in the fall of 1997, sources told *Wizard*. The series will spin out of the "Generation X" telefilm, which aired on Fox on Feb. 20 to so-so ratings. Fox passed on a "Gen X" series.

Scripts are already being worked on for the series. It's likely that Eric Blakeney, who wrote and executive produced the "Generation X" movie, will be involved in the series, and New World's Bruce Sallan and Marvel's Stan Lee and Avi Arad will return as executive producers.

Casting won't take place for several months. The telefilm's core characters—Banshee, White Queen, Jubilee, Monet, Mondo, Skin, Buff and Refrax—will likely return, but there may be some new performers in the roles, although producers were pleased with the original cast. Heather McComb, who played Jubilee, has already appeared in other telefilms since "Generation X" aired.

With "Generation X" now a go as a series, sources indicated that live-action television plans for **Nick Fury** and **She-Hulk** have been put on hold. A Black Widow telefilm from New World remains in Fox's plans, however, and could go into production this year.

Marvel still has numerous live-action theatrical movies in development, including New Line Cinema's **"Blade"** starring **Wesley Snipes**, and, according to a source, could have up to three "major" announcements by the end of the summer.

SHAQ ATTACK: O'NEAL AS STEEL

Coming soon to a theater near you: **Shaquille O'Neal** as **Steel**.

Really. O'Neal, the All-Star center of the NBA's Orlando Magic, is set to go before the cameras in Los Angeles in August for a live-action film based on the DC Comics hero. Warner Bros. announced the film on June 20.

"Steel" will be written and directed by Kenneth Johnson, who is familiar with the superhero genre. Johnson created the live-action "Incredible Hulk" television series and has written and directed all of the "Alien Nation" telefilms.

Here's how Warner Bros. described the film:

"Metals specialist John Henry Irons discovers that top-secret army defensive weapons he helped design are being used by a street gang to commit dazzling, high-tech robberies—and threaten to spread to a dangerous, worldwide criminal organization.

"Due to the security sensitivity, Irons is forced to form his own clandestine team. He creates counter-weaponry, an amazing suit of armor and a mythical alter ego—known as Steel."

O'Neal is a big comics fan and sports a **Superman** tattoo. He has already appeared in two films, "Blue Chips" and "Kazaam," and recorded two rap albums. O'Neal, Leonard Armato and Bruce Binkow are executive producers of "Steel," and producers are Quincy Jones, David Salzman and Joel Simon of QDE. It is not yet known what connection this film will have to the Superman mythos.

ANIMATED ASH

DreamWorks has acquired the feature-film rights to **Ash**, the firefighting hero from Event Comics' **Joe Quesada** and **Jimmy Palmiotti**. The deal—involving, according to sources, "a high six-figure sum"—is targeted toward a big-budget animated Ash movie.

"Ash" is part of a growing animation slate for DreamWorks, which was formed by Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen. It could be the studio's first release in the superhero genre, however.

"It's an unbelievable thrill," Quesada told *Wizard*. "I grew up on Spielberg stuff. And if anybody can do anything like this in animation, it's Katzenberg. He's been doing it for years at Disney. We're

"Generation X" photo courtesy of Fox-TV

SHAQ ARMORS UP AS STEEL

in great hands."

Producer Andrew Lazar brought "Ash" to DreamWorks. It eventually wound up in the hands of Walter Parkes, DreamWorks' head of live-action films. He took it to Katzenberg, who decided to turn it into an animated feature.

Screenwriter Rand Ravich wrote the "Ash" treatment and will be handling the script.

"He lives about eight blocks away from me," Quesada said of Ravich. "We've been talking to him for quite a while. The last six months while *Ash* #0 was taking shape, he was telling me some of his ideas, and I said, 'Are you reading my mind?' He had so thoroughly read the books and so wanted to be true to them, he had figured out many of the things we were going to do."

HULK CASTING UPDATE

Due to scheduling conflicts, **Genie Francis**, the actress from "General Hospital," will be able to do only six episodes as the voice of Betty Ross on **"The Incredible Hulk"** animated UPN series starting this fall. She will be replaced by Felice Sampler.

Clancy Brown, who is doing the voice of Lex Luthor on "Superman," is handling the voice of Sasquatch. Sasquatch's human side, Walter Langowski, is played by Peter Strauss. Mark Taylor is the voice of Don Blake, and John Rhys-Davies ("Sliders") reprises his Thor role from "Fantastic Four." Model-actress Kathy Ireland, the voice of Crystal on "Fantastic Four," is taking on the voice of Ogress, a female gamma mutant who works for The Leader.

ALLRED'S "ASTROESQUE"

Mike Allred would dearly like to direct the **Madman** film, which is based on his comic book characters and in development at Universal. He's already written the first draft of the screenplay and will be producing.

And now he can tell Universal he's an experienced director. Allred—with collaborator Shane Hawks—is in post-production on **"Astroesque,"** an independent film that he wrote, produced, directed, appeared in and is doing the music for. He used some of his option money from "Madman" and filmed "Astroesque" in two weeks of 18-hour days—with lots of friends and several pros from the comics industry.

"I've always been a big fan of film and I'm a big music nut," Allred told *Wizard*. "My hobby of comics turned into a career and I'm applying my other loves, film and music, in the same way."

Allred called "Astroesque" an "action/adventure/science fiction/religious epic." The film is about a man from another world who shows up on a beach and meets a little boy with his family. He has visions of the boy being in danger and puts himself into an inner-dimensional suspended animation. Turns out the alien has come to Earth because of the second coming of the son of God to the planet.

"And it was all made for under $10,000!" Allred said.

Allred, assisted by drummer Bond, is doing the soundtrack under the band name Red Rocket 7, which he said he will turn into a comic book. He hopes to have "Astroesque" completed by the end of the year and in time for next year's film festivals. He said the film will then be released on home video by **Dark Horse**.

Meanwhile, Allred said the "Madman" movie script is being polished by Dean Lowery, who has also written a script for a movie based on the *Doom* computer games. Allred will appear in "Chasing Amy," the new film from **Kevin Smith** of "Clerks" and "Mallrats" fame.

Shaquille O'Neal photo courtesy of Everett Collection

NEW MIGHT FOR LONDON NIGHT

The Ministry of Film's recent purchase of half of **London Night Studios** gives it the film rights to the comic company's properties. **Everette Hartsoe**, CEO at London Night, told *Wizard* that "Dead Boys," adapting a comic due in August, and **"Razor,"** with production team Renny Harlin and Geena Davis involved, are among the movie projects being developed.

"This deal makes us much more aggressive," Hartsoe said.

TICK GETS A SECOND HOME

"The Tick," the animated series based on Ben Edlund's comic characters, will not only return for a third season of new Saturday morning episodes this September on Fox, it will also become a prime-time series on cable's Comedy Central network.

Comedy Central will air episodes of "The Tick" Sundays at 7 p.m. following their Saturday morning debuts on Fox. The deal—brokered by Saban Entertainment, which handles worldwide distribution of the series—marks the first time a cable and broadcast network have teamed up for new programming.

According to Comedy Central, it will begin its "Tick" run with 10 new episodes and will carry at least 36 episodes of the series.

"Given its young adult audience, it has great potential to become a prime-time hit on our network," said Ben Zurier, vice president of development and acquisitions at Comedy Central.

DARK HORSE IN MOVIE GALLOP

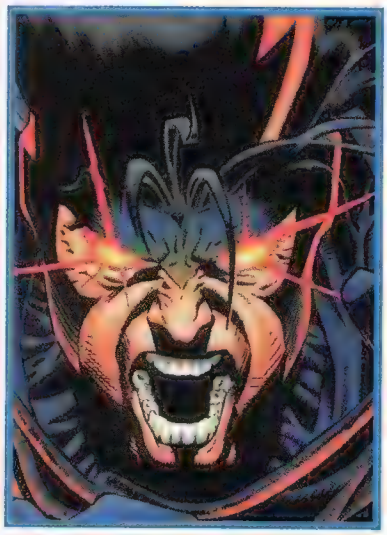
Dark Horse continues to be a force in movies. *Daily Variety* reported that former Los Angeles Raiders football player **Howie Long** will star in a Disney film based on the ***Black Cross*** comic book created by Steve Perry and Chris Warner. Russell Mulcahy, who directed "Highlander" and "The Shadow" and has been linked to a Ghost Rider film, was in negotiations to direct "Black Cross," which begins production March 1 from a screenplay by Warner.

"Black Cross" is part of Dark Horse's teaming with InterMedia to produce up to five films in the $10-$40 million range. Eight to 10 properties will likely be developed, and sources told *Wizard* possibilities also include **"Foot Soldiers."**

Universal has green-lighted **"Virus"** to begin production in October or November. John Bruno is directing the effects-heavy film, with Gale Anne Hurd producing. New Line Cinema has purchased the option for **"Cross,"** Andrew Vachss' comic series that was published by Dark Horse.

"Barb Wire," which bombed at the box office, should do better when it is released on home video in August. Some 450,000 copies have been pre-ordered. And add the sequel to **"The**

ASH WILL GET THE SPIELBERG TREATMENT



FOOTBALL STAR HOWIE LONG WILL TACKLE "BLACK CROSS"

Mask" to the mix; it's expected to be begin production by next year at the latest.

SHORT TAKES

According to *Daily Variety*, **Arnold Schwarzenegger** will get more than $20 million for his role of Mr. Freeze in **"Batman and Robin."** Sources who have read Akiva Goldsman's script told *Wizard* the movie focuses more on the dynamics between the two main heroes than "Batman Forever" did....WB's new animated series **"Superman"** kicks off with a special prime-time movie on Sept. 6, while the series' regular Saturday morning time slot takes flight Sept. 7. **DC Comics**' new title based on the show, *Superman Adventures*, launches on Sept. 4. The title's covers will offer original background paintings from "Superman" as background art. Meanwhile, WB has picked up the rights to **"Batman: The Animated Series"** from Fox, and is considering producing new shows for a 1997 release....**John Leguizamo** ("To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar") will play the Clown in the live-action **"Spawn"** movie from New Line Cinema. The part of Wanda was not cast at press time, although two well known actresses, **Angela Bassett** and **Teresa Randall**, were showing interest in the part. Michael Jai White stars in the title role, and production will begin Aug. 12 in Los Angeles....**"The Crow: City of Angels"** will be released in more than 2,000 theaters nationally by Miramax on Aug. 2. The soundtrack is already available, with contributors including Iggy Pop (who plays a villain in the movie), Hole, Bush, PJ Harvey, White Zombie and Seven Mary Three....**Rob Liefeld** said at the Chicago Comicon that **"Doom's IV"** may now become an animated movie. He said **"Prophet"** has the most heat among his potential movie projects, with a completed script, and production from TriStar Pictures could begin next year....Some **"Star Trek"** news from this year's Dragon*Con: The next movie, **"Star Trek: First Contact,"** will reportedly feature a new *Enterprise* with much more detail, a score by Jerry Goldsmith (who did the first and fifth films), metallic contact lenses for Geordi instead of his visor, and possibly the last appearance of Data. The actor who plays him, **Brent Spiner**, has voiced concern that he's getting too old to keep Data looking the same. On the TV front, look for special 30th anniversary episodes of **"Deep Space Nine"** and **"Voyager"** this September. "Voyager" will reportedly feature Tuvok's first assignment—on the *Excelsior*, with Sulu and several other Classic "Trek"ers. "DSN" may have Sisko wind up on the Classic *Enterprise*, interacting with characters in original TV scenes *a la* "Forrest Gump." It should also have a major set-up for "First Contact," in which Worf finds his way off DSN and back with the "Next Generation" crew....A ***Strangers in Paradise*** movie or television series? It could happen, *SiP* creator Terry Moore told *Wizard*. He said he's been in contact with numerous Hollywood types the past few months. Moore's dream cast would include Mira Sorvino as Katchoo and Jennifer Connolly as Francine....Martin Campbell, who directed "Goldeneye," has replaced Robert Rodriguez as the director of **"Zorro,"** a TriStar film which will star **Antonio Banderas** ("Desperado").

Rob Allstetter, who followed the creation of Ash #0 *elsewhere in this issue, has a Marmaduke tattoo, if anyone's interested.*

Celebrity Profile

DOLPH LUNDGREN

Dolph Lundgren is taking a break from acting this summer. The Swedish action movie star, best known for getting the snot beat out of him by Sylvester Stallone in "Rocky IV," is the team leader of the United States Olympics modern pentathlon squad in the Summer Games in Atlanta.

Lundgren got into the five-sport event—10-meter pistol shooting, *épée* fencing, 300-meter freestyle swimming, equestrian jumping and 4,000-meter cross-country run—three years ago when he starred in a film called "Pentathlon" and trained with many true athletes. The pentathlon faces extinction as an Olympics event, and Lundgren has been campaigning to bring attention to the challenging sport, appearing on shows like "Late Night with Conan O'Brien."

Lundgren called *Wizard* from Sweden, just before arriving in America for the Summer Games. He talked about the Olympics, his lead role in "The Punisher" movie and comic books in general.

Dolph Lundgren photo courtesy of Everett Collection

The Olympics: "I've never even been to the Olympics, and for my first Olympics, to actually be part of it is special...to be part of an attraction that is much more meaningful to mankind than show business."

Olympics duties: "I'm responsible to the USOC [United States Olympic Committee] for the conduct of the team and I arrange all the travel. I'm an integral part of the team."

Favorite and least favorite pentathlon events: "I liked the fencing. I'm pretty tall and conditioned in karate and working with an opponent; there's a certain amount of aggression with fencing. Horseback riding was my least favorite. Sure, I fell off the horse [making 'Pentathlon'], but we never told the producers about it."

Appearing in the Opening Ceremonies: "I'll be the short guy with the blonde hair...I'm joking with you."

The Punisher movie: "It was an interesting character. Working on an action film like that always has its problems. That was in '88, and I enjoyed it very much, but I wish I would have been more experienced and contributed to it more, and gotten the feeling of the comic book across a little better."

Comic books: "I like comic books myself. I read them before the [Punisher] movie and I've read them after. There's a certain style to the way they're done that would be quite beautiful in movies. And there's a young generation of people like [Quentin] Tarantino and John Woo, who are into that hyper-violence that would work on film."

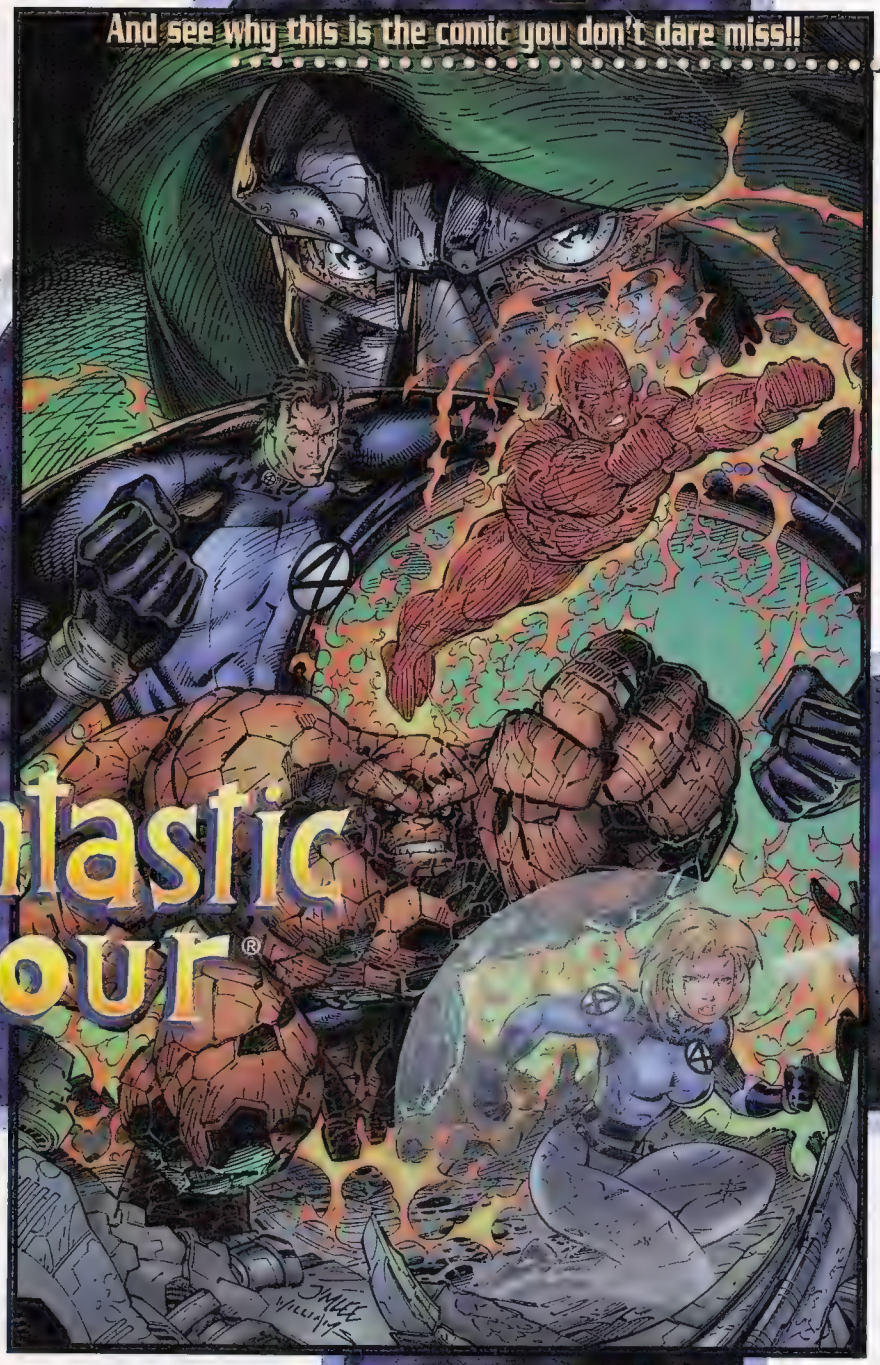
Comic book films: "It's tough to translate comic books to the screen. You have to have some closure in movies, where comic books keep going and going.

"I thought [director Tim] Burton did a great job on the Batman movies, especially the first one. It was a dramatic movie. Even the later ones were good, but they will not be remembered as having as lasting of an image."

The possibility of a new Punisher movie, which was originally intended for television but now might be a feature film: "Interesting. I'll have to find out where the script is. In fact, I'm calling today. If it's well done, I'd be interested."

Put Two and Two Together

And see why this is the comic you don't dare miss!!



Jim Lee
Brandon Choi
Scott Williams

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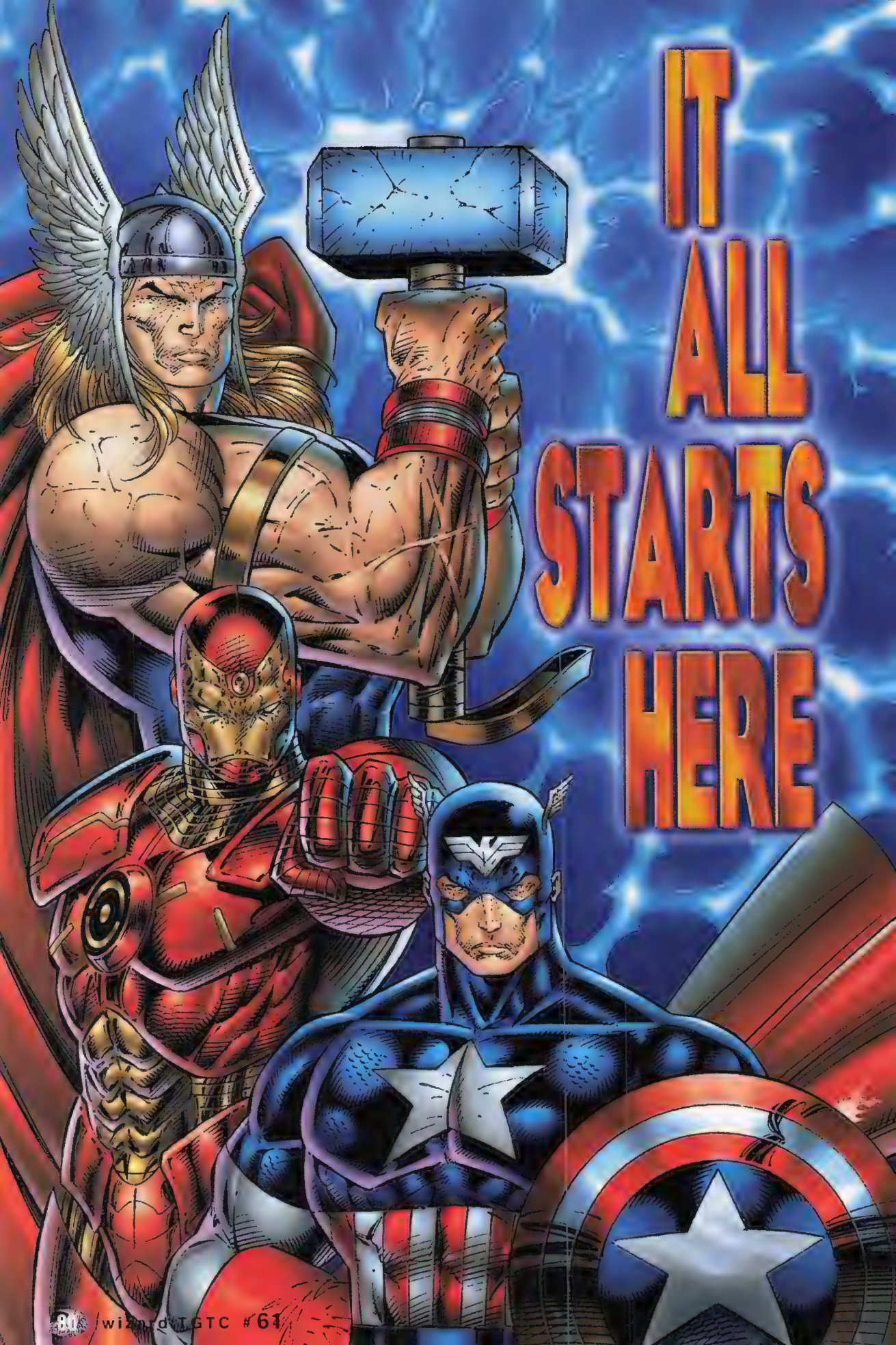
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The Truth about Cats and Dogs

Dave Cooper takes on sexism, Hollywood porn stars and conspiracy theories in his new serial *Crumple*

Not many comic artists can instantly pull you into a fully realized fantasy world like Dave Cooper can. After years of trying different genres like autobiography and reality-based fiction, he broke out at the beginning of this year with *Suckle: The Status of Basil*. Unlike his earlier comics, this graphic novel throws the reader into a bizarre world full of surreal characters where anything is possible. As you follow the innocent and naive Basil through the strange landscape of *Suckle*, you discover all of the weirdness along with him. Now Cooper is set to build on the creative freedom Suckle afforded him with *Crumple*, a new story serialized in the anthology *Zero Zero*.

This nine-part story has a different feel from the organic mushiness of *Suckle*. Set in the same world, but in a different era with an oppressive industrial feel, *Crumple* follows the life of a dissatisfied assembly line worker named Knuckle and his unemployed sexist friend Zev. "The first episode starts with Knuckle getting dumped by his girlfriend Audrey," Cooper reveals. "Knuckle and Zev set out on a holiday to Hollywood looking for chicks. Since that's where all the porn is made, they figure it has to be overflowing with bimbos. Along the way, they uncover a secret sect that all women are a part of. I want to make this story feel like a '50s conspiracy movie like 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers.' So many people seem to think that men and women are two different animals, and I'm going to use that as a starting-off point for *Crumple*."

This new story has provided Cooper with the opportunity to refine his artwork. One of his earlier series was *Pressed Tongue*, a *Yummy Fur*-inspired comic that was drawn in a style full of cross-hatching and intricate details. "After that comic, I was so sick and tired of all that rendering," Cooper admits. "I wanted every panel to be a dense, textured illustration, instead of making choices that would serve the story. I'm still very proud of *Pressed Tongue*, but it was a bit distracting, all that texture. With *Suckle* I tried to get rid of all that stuff, but some hatching found its way in eventually. Now with *Crumple* I've tried to keep it totally black-and-white line art. It's not an organic story like *Suckle*. *Crumple* is sort of a more unpleasant story all around. It's just sharp and angular, and my art reflects that."

Crumple is closely related to *Suckle*, but both of these comics are a big step compared to Cooper's earlier comics like *Pressed Tongue*, *Chronic Idiocy* and *A Big Someplace*. With *Suckle*, Cooper let loose and gave his imagination free reign to create characters and new worlds. A less experienced cartoonist would not be able to pull off the sheer weirdness of *Suckle*, but Cooper's precise yet cartoony style is perfectly suited for it. It seems like Cooper is finally creating the comics that he was meant to draw.

According to Cooper, there were many things that influenced his work on the graphic novel. "I wanted to do a book like *Suckle* for a long time, but nothing came together until I went to see a film festival featuring [director] Alexandro Jodorowsky. They showed '*El Topo*,' 'The Holy Mountain,' and '*Sante Sangre*' all in the same week. It totally blew my mind. I couldn't believe this guy's fertile imagination. When it came time to design characters and stuff for *Suckle*, I wanted to get away from the realistic things, like real people and real settings. I went back to my early influences like Dr. Seuss, Vaughn Bodé, Moebius and [children's book illustrator] Tomi Ungerer."

Creating an off-the-wall comic like *Suckle* was a draining experience for Cooper. "It just felt like I got rid of so much baggage. Two years of ideas came out all at once, and

Cover art from *Suckle* #1

by tom palmer jr.

Basil from *Suckle*

it was really satisfying. I don't think I've ever done a book that was as satisfying. When I got copies of it in the mail, I was just so happy. I was happy that a copy of *Suckle* looks good on a coffee table. It's sort of what I was hoping it would look like the whole time I was working on it. When I got a copy, I put it on the coffee table and breathed a sigh of relief. 'Ah, it looks nice.'"

Cooper isn't just interested in creating books that look nice to leave out when friends come over to visit. His main concern is to just make comics that are fun. "I want people to just get a sense of satisfaction, that it's an entertaining read. It sounds kind of banal, but that's what I'm really into now. I used to be into more didactic stuff, but nowadays I just look for something that's really fun to look at or fun to read."

While his comics may be fun to read, they are often full of gross, icky stuff. Cooper blames this fascination for the grotesque on his childhood. "When I was little, my dad used to have medical journals lying around the house. He was the town doctor where I grew up in Nova Scotia, and I was remember seeing these pictures of open wounds and gross stuff at an early age."

Cooper's childhood was full of much more than gross anatomy books. He also remembers when he first became interested in drawing. "I was always fascinated by watching people draw. A friend of my dad's, Tomi Ungerer, who happened to be a children's book illustrator, would let me watch him sketch. That was one of my first exposures to making a living as an artist. He'd come over and do little drawings for me. I also remember when my dad taught me perspective. It amazed me to watch him draw this 1920s-style car with the vanishing points and everything."

Cooper's early interest in drawing seems to have paid off. After laboring in obscurity for so long, people are finally noticing his comics, and Cooper is very excited about what the future holds. "I feel like I'm getting somewhere I've never been before with my work. I just feel like it's a lot more mature than it ever was. I feel like people are recognizing my work, but you can never see yourself through other people's eyes; you don't really know how well known you are. I have more projects in the works than I ever have [five or six major projects], and I think that now I'll have less difficulty finding publishers for them. That's really what I'm always aiming for—to find an outlet for my work." W

In his 96 years of writing this column, Tom Palmer Jr. has never forgotten to write one of these here bios... until now. He has since been beaten and shot.

FYI

Crumple begins serialization in Fantagraphics' *Zero Zero* #11, which is scheduled to ship in July. Look for a fully painted cover by Cooper, and a 17-page chapter to start off the story, plus other stuff by David Mazzucchelli, Dave Collier, Roy Tompkins and Richard Sala. Fantagraphics also has copies of Cooper's *Suckle* and his *Pressed Tongue* series. Call them at 1-800-657-1100 for a free catalog. And remember that Cooper's work is for you mature reader types. Cooper has also worked on several mainstream titles, most notably *Grendel Tales: Homecoming* with Pat McEown from Dark Horse Comics. Give them a call at 1-800-862-0052 for ordering information.

Dave Cooper's Recommended Reading

"I'm really into Jim Woodring [*Jim*], Jay Stephens [*Atomic City Tales, Land of Nod*] and David Mazzucchelli [*Rubber Blanket*]. I still look forward to Dan Clowes' *Eightball*. He's so consistently amazing that people tend to forget how good he is. I like Rick Veitch's work [*Rare Bit Fiends*], Bernie Mireault [*The Jam*], Bob Fingerman [*Minimum Wage*], Pat McEown, Tom Hart [*The Sands*], Kaz [*Underworld*], Sam Henderson [*Magic Whistle*] and a French cartoonist named Stephane Blanquet. I think we'll be seeing a lot more of him. Then there's people like Milo Manara, Edward Gorey, George Herriman, Herge's *Tintin*, and Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaa*. These are all people whose stuff I look at and I think, 'Oh my God, how could I ever be that good?' It's sort of depressing, but also quite inspiring, depending on my mood."

Recommended Reading

• ***Yikes!*** Steven "Ribs" Weissman's *Yikes!* is reminiscent of the very early issues of *Yummy Fur*, and that's a good thing. Weissman has a nice, slick style and his comics are delightfully goofy. With a cast that includes such memorable little demons like the Pullapart Boy, Li'l Bloody and X-Ray Spence, how could you go wrong? Best of all, the new fifth issue (set for August release) will be in color. Get your comic shop to order *Yikes!* for yourself, or you can write directly to Steven Weissman. His address is 83 John St., San Francisco, CA 94133 and copies of *Yikes!* are $2.50 each.

• ***Strangehaven*** British comics artist Gary Spencer Millidge has a photo-realistic style that suits his comic *Strangehaven* (right) perfectly. Fans of "Twin Peaks" will certainly get a kick out of this comic, since it revolves around some strange goings-on in a small British village. Millidge is one of a bunch of British creators (like *Kane*'s Paul Grist) who are self-publishing in the American market, so you should get your local comic shop to support *Strangehaven*. If you have trouble finding a copy, you can order from the publisher. A sample issue of *Strangehaven* is $4.50 U.S. funds, and six-issue subscriptions are $25. Write to Abiogenesis Press, P.O. Box 448, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2FN, England for more information.

scene

A guide to Japanese comics and animation

by Carl Gustav Horn

the broad face of cpm comics

Having a "broad face" is an old Japanese expression for having a wide influence—and that's the goal that Central Park Media, already one of the foremost American licensers and distributors of anime, is shooting for with their expanding line of manga-related comics.

Many people in the U.S. may have heard that the Japanese like comics, but the proof is still a little stark when it's in *The New York Times*, as it was in a May report on what the most popular movies, books and so forth are in nine different countries. Whereas the best-selling magazines in America and France are TV-related, the most popular magazines in Japan are comic books. It's a good reminder that in Japan, comics are as ubiquitous a form of popular entertainment as TV. And just like TV, Japanese comics are a mix of trash, fun, and the truly groundbreaking. Lopa Mukherjee, until recently the director of sales and marketing at another American anime-manga pioneer, San Francisco's Viz Communications, has crossed the country to become general manager for Central Park's comics line, CPM Comics. Recently, Mukherjee spoke to "Manga Scene" about where her line is headed.

First on CPM's plate are more traditional projects such as comics adaptations of mainstream Central Park anime titles such as *Votoms*, a classic in the hard-boiled mecha combat genre with its unforgettable protagonist, the dark and traumatized Chirico. Art in the CPM Comics version will be supplied by Tim Eldred. There's also *Iczer-3*, the first sequel to the *Iczer-1* series, which Mukherjee says will be "tougher" and more in line with the original's sci-fi/horror feel. In December, CPM will release a 24-page color trade paperback, *Women of U.S. Manga Corps*, consisting of splash pages of heroines from various CPM titles as depicted by Bill Sienkiewicz, Dan Panosian, Ariel Olivetti and others. "Since Marvel and DC cut back so many titles, we've been blessed with a great selection of people looking for new titles—an opportunity that didn't exist three or four years ago," says Mukherjee.

CPM's adaption of Anime 18's *La Blue Girl*...kicking butts and taking names!

Another opportunity CPM will be mining is a move towards establishing a new audience. "Getting more readers involved in our comics includes appealing to a neglected market—little girls, the kind who are cheering "Sailor Moon" on TV right now," says Mukherjee. Previously, there's been no comic like it in the U.S., but in November, CPM Comics will be releasing *Battle Skipper*, by writer Paul Castliglia and artist Dan Nakrosis, a series about five young high-school girls who compete with each other wearing their own self-designed battle suits. "I think that just like "Sailor Moon," these are the kind of exciting role models for girls that have been largely missing from pop culture until now. We all know there's been such an influx of comics that have been so similar to each other. CPM doesn't want to be copying others and trying to take readers away from the audience that's already been established. We're trying to establish a new audience—a larger and more diverse one for comics."

Part of that diversity is 180 degrees from *Battle Skipper*. CPM's analog to their adult anime line, Anime 18, is the rather curiously-named Bare Bear Press—absolutely not for children. Sonya Brown, Bare Bear's editor, detailed that her line will feature adaptations of certain Anime 18 titles by American artists. First up is *La Blue Girl*, a monthly 12-issue, 32 page black-and-white series with "a young fresh crew" that includes Matt Lunsford of *Ninja High School*, Daphne Lage from *Tall Tails*, and the rookie writer Jose Calderon, who will be beginning all original stories with issue #3. As well, Brown notes that the comic version of *Demon Beast Invasion* will feature Dave Cooper, a veteran of DC Comics Annuals who is also known for his inking and artwork on the *Star Wars* game from West End. "He's very gritty and dark—his stylized approach represents more of a symbiosis of American comics and anime than a work in the 'manga style.' "

How are people going to react to Americans "re-doing" anime in pen and ink? "We wanted to see our artists' interpretation of the anime and their evocation of its atmosphere," says Mukherjee. "We'll take the wonderful storyline and art inspiration from anime and make an import product that appeals to the American audience more easily. We are now trying to find ways not just to mimic the process, but to create a new approach to storyboarding the anime in comic form. When Japanese cars were designed to fit Americans'

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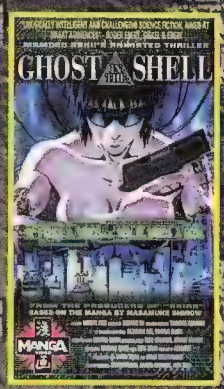

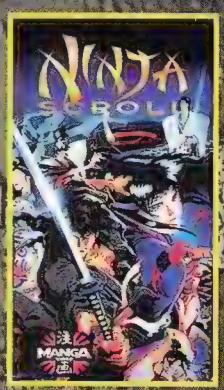

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Dave Cooper serves up the cover for CPM's *Demon Beast Invasion* #1.

needs and tastes, that's when they really took off. While the direct imports will always have appeal, we want our readers to also find our comics in a style they're more familiar with." In fact, the interesting point of what CPM Comics is trying to do with their 'American manga' is to take anime that in many cases originally started as Japanese comics and then 'translate' them back into the visual language of American comics—or, considering the influence that manga and anime have here these days, into a new 'dialect.' "

It's also the case, of course, that licensing the original manga can be a lengthy process. However, the fact that U.S. artists will be doing their own interpretations of anime titles doesn't rule out CPM Comics bringing over any of their original manga in the future. "We are negotiating for several titles at this point," says Mukherjee. "Our game plan for '97 and beyond is to appeal to many different interests and follow the 'diversity' example of Dark Horse. When you're borrowing, why not borrow from the best?"

Mukherjee concludes that "People here should also remember that in Japan, all manga means 'comics.' It doesn't mean what Americans think of as 'manga-style art,' which may only be what they've seen so far in America. In truth, that represents only a small fraction of the actual styles you'll find in manga. American artists doing their own interpretation of anime can also fit within the incredibly broad field of manga. What we want to see in the end with our different styles are comics for every demographic that everyone reads—I want to go on the train in America and see the investment bankers and stockbrokers clutching comics for the commute, just like in Japan." W

Carl Gustav Horn clutches rolled-up comics on his morning commute...if only to fight off those mean and nasty investment bankers.

picks of the month

manga

Spirit of Wonder

(Dark Horse, $2.95, 5-issue monthly series, b&w, 32 pgs.)

Japanese fantasy and science-fiction artist Kenji Tsuruta is known for drawing at a speed somewhat slower than your average box turtle, but when he finally gets done the results are a little thing of beauty, such as this manga. *Spirit of Wonder* is like Hayao Miyazaki's classic anime film, "Laputa, The Castle in the Sky," in that it takes place in a marvelous vision of the kind of 19th century English country village where young engineers devise astounding inventions in their attics. Miyazaki, however, probably would not have thought up the blunt-nosed sexiness of *Spirit*'s protagonist, Miss China, proprietor of a restaurant and boarding house. Miss China suffers under Dr. Breckinridge, the deadbeat mad scientist living upstairs, while pining away for his lab assistant Jim, a lad who plans to use the doctor's incredible "Space Reflection Lens" to demonstrate his hidden affection for China—on the moon! *Spirit of Wonder* is a charming, very well-drawn series. Readers should pick up any they've missed.

anime

Maison Ikkoku

(Viz Video, dubbed, 52 minutes, $24.95, series on sale now)

"Urusei Yatsura" and "Ranma 1/2," both already released in the United States, were very popular series for the Aaron Spelling of anime, Rumiko Takahashi. But many will say her best work was the more-adult "Maison Ikkoku," a perfect blend of comedy and true romance. In this series, the protagonist Godai is a young man away from home, struggling to get into a good university—an uphill battle when his housemates (the 'Kramer'-like Yotsuya is not to be missed) have a full schedule of drinking, partying, mooching, flashing and generally reminding Godai of the pathetic existence he leads. Godai is about to crack when the new landlord arrives—Kyoko, a beautiful young woman with a haunted past. "Maison Ikkoku" is a series you can definitely stick with, as each dual-episode tape develops Godai's struggle to make something of himself and somehow get closer to Kyoko—all while sharing a house with residents just a few ounces short of a full saki bottle!

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The "Life in the Big City" Contest

CONTEST

Ever dream about what life is like in the big city? No, not New York or Chicago or L.A., but the only big city that matters—Astro City! Well, here's your chance to use your imagination and show us your dreams of the big city.

We want you to draw us a slice of ordinary everyday life in Astro City. Does Astro City have a football team? Show us what their uniform and logo look like. Or how about the Astro City newsstands. What's on their magazine covers? What kind of TV shows do they have that we don't? What movie posters are around town? You get the idea. Now go with it and send in an entry!

Do a good job and you might win:

Those Dreamy Prizes

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader whose entry is judged the best will receive Alex Ross' original character concept sketch of Astro City hero "Jack-in-the-Box" *and* the Homage Comics hardcover edition of "Life in the Big City" signed by writer/creator Kurt Busiek, series artist Brent Anderson and designer/cover artist Alex Ross.

Second Prize (10): Ten other readers with imaginative entries will each get an Astro City T-shirt. Suitable for wearing.

Third Prize (25): Twenty-five other readers whose entries are still pretty keen will each get a copy of the new Homage Comics *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* #1 signed by writer/visionary Kurt Busiek.

This month's contest is sponsored by Homage Comics, the new home for quality creator-owned comics.

Kurt Busiek's ASTRO CITY

HOMAGE COMICS

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send to: "Life in the Big City" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is September 30, 1996. Dream big!

Civic Legal Statute

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Homage Comics and their immediate families or that rat-fink guy who saw Jack-in-the-Box when he was changin' clothes. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach it to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Life in the Big City" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Oh, when that shark bites/With his teeth, dear/Oh, he leaves them pearly white. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by September 30, 1996. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by Wizard Press and Kurt Busiek based on creativity among all properly completed entries. Judging will take place on October 15, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after October 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Life in the Big City" Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Life in the Big City Entry Form

DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 30, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Hey! Did you attach that entry?

PICKS

WIZARD's list of must-read comic books coming out in August

ASTRO CITY #1

Writer: Kurt Busiek
Artists: Brent Anderson & Will Blyberg
Release Date: August
Cover Price: $2.50

HOMAGE COMICS This acclaimed comic returns to shops with a story that ensures both new readers and fans of the original six-issue 1995 series that *Astro City* will hit the ground running. "I'm working on two levels here," says Busiek. "People who have been reading right along get a story about a guy they've never seen before, and learn tantalizing bits about Astro City's past and all that cool jazz. But for those who haven't read the comic before, it brings them up to speed about the different neighborhoods and superheroes."

Titled "Welcome to Astro City," it continues the title's distinctive approach of telling the story from a participant's perspective. This time, the focal point is a man who moves to town with his two daughters. The day he arrives, the city is attacked by Thunderhead, a two-mile-high storm god. Thundy intends to level the place then roll over the rest of the world. "He's bad news," Busiek understates. Of course, Astro City isn't your average wimpy town, and the city's heroes rise to the challenge.

Not only will readers see familiar heroes such as Samaritan, the First Family and Honor Guard, they'll also meet some new guys including The Gentleman, a tuxedo-clad hero. We'll also learn such goodies as the Silver Agent's secret identity, and who the city's first costumed hero was. As always, hero designs and the cover are created by Alex Ross, painter of *Kingdom Come* and *Marvels*.

The underlying theme of the issue concerns why this man and his daughters moved to Astro City and why they—or anyone else—would want to stay. "A recurring question is why people live here," Busiek says. "By the end, that's explained for at least some of the residents. So readers get stellar, slam-bang superhero action and some humanity to boot."

If you like *Astro City*, *Wizard* recommends you read... *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, also written by Busiek, which tells tales of Spidey's early days that can be read by both old and new fans.

AQUAMAN #25

Writer: Peter David
Artists: Marty Egeland & Howard Shum
Release Date: August 21
Cover Price: $1.75

DC COMICS Aquaman wraps up his battle against the alien invaders this issue, facing a major dilemma in the process. "The invaders have turned out to be more like alien barterers," explains writer Peter David. "And they've offered Aquaman complete and total power in exchange for helping them. But it's not as easy a choice as it usually is. I've tried to avoid that typical tried-and-true…or *trite*-and-true situation."

In most cases, the hero magnanimously would turn down such power and go back to fighting the good fight. But that can't happen this time. If Aquaman turns down the aliens, they'll tell the world that they could have delivered a Golden Age to Earth and it's Aquaman's fault that they didn't. So why doesn't Aquaman help them, gain the power they offer, avoid being dissed by humanity and solve many of the world's problems? Sounds like a win-win situation, right? "That's one of many questions answered in this issue," David says cagily.

The tale also features the final confrontation with Kordax, who's been battling our fishy friends since issue #12. The connections between Dolphin and Kordax also will be made clear, and the relationship between Aquaman's adopted son, Garth (a.k.a. Aqualad, though now he goes by the name Tempest) and his real son, Koryak, will be spelled out. "There are a lot of revelations in this issue, especially for Aquaman," David says. "This is the conclusion to the saga, and I've tried to make it as atypical as possible."

The events cause a permanent change in our hero, David adds. "This story offers an answer to those people who perceive Aquaman as someone who just talks to fish," he explains. "They haven't come to grips with the full range of the character. This provides an indication of how powerful he can be."

This issue conveniently wraps things up in time for *Aquaman* #26 to participate in DC's fall crossover, "The Final Night" (formerly "In Darkest Night"). It also serves as a departure point for Garth, who takes a sabbatical to star in his own as-yet unscheduled four-part mini-series (written and illustrated by Phil Jimenez) that will take a closer look at his new powers, and give readers more background on this older and very changed former sidekick.

"As always, I'm interested in seeing how readers will react to what I've done with the characters in this story," says David. "I always try to avoid their expectations and still give them a good story."

■ Big Picks written by Craig Shutt

If you like *Aquaman*, *Wizard* recommends you read…um…well, we really can't recommend any other comic that currently fits the type of comic *Aquaman* is. Sorry. (Fans of Peter David should otherwise read *Incredible Hulk* and *Supergirl*.)

MORE PICKS

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

BATMAN #535

DC COMICS The people of Gotham City are being bumped off one-by-one and the only clue as to who's doing it are the words "The Ogre" painted on the city's walls. When Batman investigates, he finds that he's up against Marge Schott, the owner of the Cincinnati Reds and fifth horseman of the Apocalypse! Can Bat's defeat the most frightening villain this side of...oh wait, our mistake. Wrong Ogre. This one is a new Bat-foe. Nowhere near as exciting, but check it out anyway. By Doug Moench, Kelley Jones and John Beatty. **$3.95 (ENHANCED COVER); $2.95 (REGULAR EDITION)**

BATMAN & ROBIN ADVENTURES #11

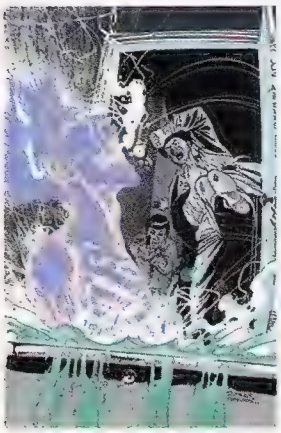
DC COMICS Something's been hangin' out in the Batcave and is scaring the crap out of Robin and Alfred. Bane with gas-cramps? Nope. The Ventriloquist doing rude things with his little puppet pal? Uh-uh. Whatever it is, it's up to Batman to pull a Ralph Kramden: "This is my cave, and I'm the king of my cave, Alice!" By Ty Templeton, Brandon Kruse and Rick Burchett. **$1.75**

BATMAN: GCPD #3 (OF 4)

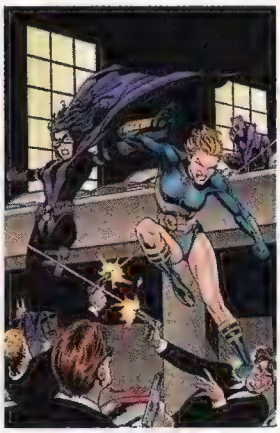
DC COMICS The cops from the Gotham Police are at it again. Montoya's been kidnapped and her captors are willing to do nasty things to her to get some information. Kitch's simple robbery case turns into a full blown murder investigation, and Bullock becomes the target of the "teddy bear" killer. Yeesh, what else can go wrong? Brought to you by Chuck Dixon, Jim Aparo and Bill Sienkiewicz. Dixon says, "It's the lowest point of Harvey Bullock's police career. He's under investigation from Internal Affairs, his partner Montoya has abandoned him and he's the target of a serial killer. The guy is just not having a good day." **$2.25**

BIRDS OF PREY: MANHUNT #2

DC COMICS Three gorgeous babes (Catwoman, Huntress and Black Canary) in tight spandex suits riding in a car with the top down? (No, not them...the car.) Sounds great to us, but not to Archer Braun. Y'see, if they get their hands on him, he's hamburger. Speeding toward you by Chuck Dixon, Matt Haley and Wade Von Grawbadger. **$1.95**



BATMAN: GCPD #3



BIRDS OF PREY: MANHUNT #2

BLOODY MARY #1

CONCRETE: THINKING LIKE A MOUNTAIN #6

BLOODY MARY #1 (OF 4)

HELIX/DC The time: 2012 A.D. The Place: Earth. Who: Mary Malone (a.k.a. Bloody Mary). She's one nun that makes those Catholic school nuns look tame. Mary is the last member of an assassination team on the hunt for her old boss. (No, not God—this ain't *Preacher*, y'know.) Taking a quick look at the writer, we're thinkin' this one might be a tad violent. Read with caution. By Garth Ennis and Carlos Ezquerra. **$2.25**

CATWOMAN #38

DC COMICS It's a "Year One" tale of Catwoman (Part 1 of 3) which tells of her first major heist. She's gotta kidnap three of Gotham's greatest criminals: The Joker, The Penguin and Two-Face! Yeah, like that's a real challenge. C'mon, like these guys are gonna put up a fight when a woman in tight purple spandex, who looks like she's smuggling two soccer balls in her shirt, says she wants to take them to her place and tie 'em up. This ushers in Doug Moench as a regular writer, with art by Jim Balent and Mark Pennington. **$1.95**

CONCRETE: THINK LIKE A MOUNTAIN #6 (OF 6)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE D'oh! It seems Concrete left some footprints behind while traipsing through the forest aiding the Earth First! people. When those footprints are mistaken for Bigfoot's, all hell breaks loose. Reporters, hunters and ordinary curious folk rush into the forest to catch a glimpse of the legendary missing link. Hey, who wouldn't? He's got big feet, and you know what the say about...wait a minute. Concrete doesn't wear pants and we've all seen...I mean, he's...y'know...smooth. This is getting weird. Roll credits and let's move on to *Daredevil*...By Paul Chadwick. **$2.95**

DAREDEVIL #375

MARVEL Daredevil's been captured, which means Foggy Nel-

MORE PICKS

son has to defend Mr. Hyde in court...all alone. Can DD's chubby and occasionally buffoonish partner win the case on his own? Will he stand tall as the hero of the day or be shunned by humanity and prove all fat people are stupid? Alongside *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, *DD*'s the best Marvel book published and the folks you got to thank for it are Karl Kesel, Cary Nord and Matt Ryan. **$1.50**

DETECTIVE COMICS #702

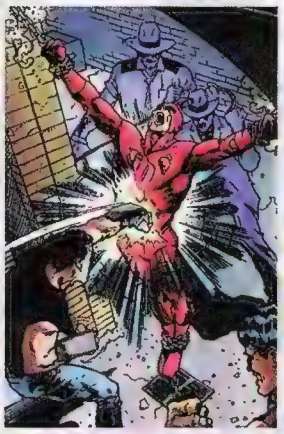
DC COMICS Rā's al Ghūl (the swine!) released another plague on Gotham, but luckily, Bats and company were able to stop this one too. But not everyone got the cure, so while Robin's tracking down the last plague victim, Commissioner Gordon's dealing with Ghul's goons who have launched an all-out attack on the city. And Batman's trying to deal with alla the chaos. By Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan and Scott Hanna. **$1.95**

FLASH #118

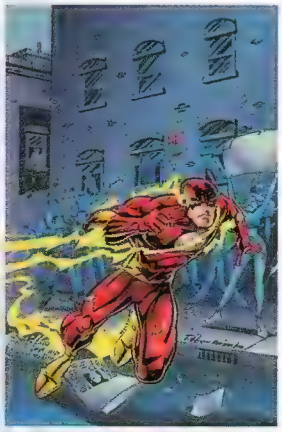
DC COMICS After racing through the speed field and jumping across time, Flash finally makes it home, but it's not at all what he expected. Linda's hangin' onto life by a thread while John Fox (That rat! Making moves on Linda while Wally was away...oooo, makes us so mad!) is racing with a robot cop from the future called Speed Metal. Can Wally figure out what's going on? By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Sergio Cariello and Brian Garvey. Waid says, "Wally's back home and Keystone City's not big enough for two Flashes. And to further complicate matters, 27th Century law enforcement Speed Metal robots want John Fox dead or alive. So Wally has to decide whether to defend this guy or let him hang because of what he did with Linda." **$1.75**

GENERATION X #20

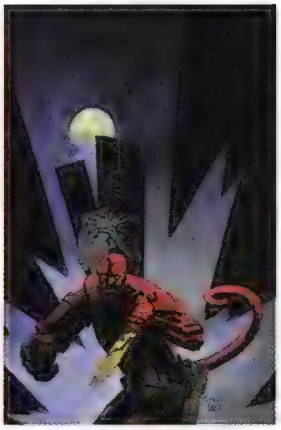
MARVEL First the White Queen kidnaps the Generation X kids to save them from Onslaught, now she's gotta kidnap them again to save them from Bastion. Waaay too much trouble for a bunch of annoying whiny kids. We'd sell 'em to the government, pocket the cash and head off to the Bahamas. By Scott Lobdell, Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham. **$1.95**



DAREDEVIL #356



FLASH #118



HELLBOY: WAKE THE DEVIL #3

HITMAN #6

GREEN ARROW #113

DC COMICS Connor Hawke (a.k.a. Green Arrow) and Eddie Fyers (a.k.a. who cares?) run off to Mongolia where Connor gets picked up by a beautiful woman and then attacked and slapped around by a warrior. Hey Connor, ya gotta remember to check the left hand for a wedding ring, buddy. By Chuck Dixon, William Rosado and Robert Campanella. **$2.25**

GREEN LANTERN #79

DC COMICS The Slab, the island prison filled with unpleasant supervillian-types, is taken over by Sonar, the baddie that GL and Flash kicked around a few issues back. Seems he's a little miffed at his prior defeat and is now back with a plan to even things up a little. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Romeo Tanghal. **$1.75**

HELLBOY: WAKE THE DEVIL #3 (OF 5)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE Hellboy makes it to the coffin of Vladimir Giurescu all set to stake the bloodsucker through the heart. But if you've ever seen any vampire flicks, you know what happens as the hero stands over the Vampire's coffin. Meanwhile, outside the castle those damn Nazis are still being resurrected by Rasputin. Nazis are like cockroaches. You think you kill 'em, but there's always more waiting in the nooks and crannies. By Mike Mignola. **$2.95**

HITMAN #6

DC COMICS That lowlife Johnny Navarone finally gets the drop on Hitman and puts a few caps in his ass (and a few other places). But Hitman ain't dead yet. His good pal Natt the Hat takes him to Wendy's house (Hitman's girlfriend) to get him fixed up. But Wendy's not gonna be too happy, 'cause Hitman hasn't been totally honest with her about his professional life. And seein' as how he's gonna be bleeding all over her furniture, he's gonna have lots of explainin' to do. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

HOUSE OF SECRETS #1

VERTIGO/DC In an old Seattle mansion, five tortured spirits calling themselves the Juris reign over a supernatural court. What do they judge? The secrets that every human keeps in his

MORE PICKS

soul...and their judgment is harsh. But to carry out their court, they need a human witness. So when a young runaway accidentally stumbles into the mansion, the Juris force her to watch as they carry out their idea of justice. By Steven T. Seagle and Teddy Kristiansen. Seagle says, "Now that talk shows and the nightly news have made even the most horrific crimes seem kind of commonplace, I'm convinced that the only real terror left for most people is the fear of being found out. That's what *House of Secrets* is all about." **$2.50 MR**

IMPULSE #18

DC COMICS Being a kid who can hardly sit still for more than a moment is sure gonna come in handy for Impulse this ish. The kid gets trapped inside a virtual reality world where the environment changes from one moment to the next—some of which are fairly unpleasant. Impulse's gotta use everything he's learned from the other speedsters to keep up with this wacky world so he can make it back to our reality in one piece. By Martin Pasko, Anthony Williams and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

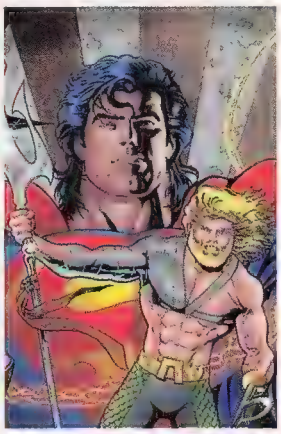
JUSTICE LEAGUE: A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHTMARE #2 (OF 3)

DC COMICS Dr. Destiny has created a world for the Justice League heroes where they can live normal lives. No more secret identities. No more fighting just because they have special powers. And apparently, some of them would prefer to live that way. But when Batman and Superman disagree, they must fight their way free and find some way to make the others realize they're being tricked before the meta-mercenaries can overrun the Earth! By Mark Waid, Fabian Nicieza, Jeff Johnson and Darick Robertson. **$2.95**

KINGDOM COME #4 (OF 4)

DC COMICS Superman and the Justice League battle the new breed of "bad guy" heroes...and every member of the Justice League is killed. The end. (Cue music.) C'mon, you don't think we'd give the ending away, do you? If you want the results to this spiffy mini-series, you're gonna have to go and buy the book. It's only...Yeesh! Five bucks?!? Ouch. By Mark Waid and Alex Ross. **$4.95**

HOUSE OF SECRETS #1



JL: A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHTMARE #2

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #85

DC COMICS The Emerald Eye hurtles some of the Legion through time, depositing them in the primitive 20th Century. No phones, no lights, no motorcars. There they have to contend with the Metropolis S.C.U., who want to know how a bunch of teens popped in out of nowhere. By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder and Ron Boyd. **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #41

DC COMICS The battle with the Emerald Eye takes its toll on the Legionnaires. Some of them are missing, some are hurt and others are dead. The team gathers themselves up, but they're in for another surprise when that old hag Mysa appears and blames them for allowing the eye to escape. By Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. **$2.25**

LOBO: DEATH & TAXES #1 (OF 4)

DC COMICS Some freakin' bastich screwed Lobo's ex-boss by gettin' her in trouble with the I.R.S. (Interstellar Revenue Service) and it's up to Lobo to set things straight by tearing out intestinal

WHAT I'M READING

name: **Roger Stern**

occupation: **Writer of *Legionnaires* and *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow***

currently reads:

Astro City is just plain good comics. The superhero lover can enjoy it on so many levels. And for your friends who aren't into superheroes, they can still enjoy it because it's a good read. *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*—boy, what a bargain. There hasn't been a bargain like this since comics cost a quarter. There's no question about which Spider-Man this is—it takes place in a very specific period. I enjoy *Wonder Woman* and I'm really looking forward to seeing what John Byrne will do with *The New Gods*. I'm waiting for Walt Simonson's next *Star Slammers* to come out from Dark Horse. I'm curious to see how the damn thing ends. *Spectre*'s a lot of fun. There are a number of other titles that, whenever they come out I take a look, like *Concrete*. There's a lot of enjoyable stuff out there."

MORE PICKS

tracts, popping eyeballs and punting small house-pets. By Keith Giffen (Welcome back to the Main Man, big guy!), Alan Grant and Alex Horley. **$2.25 MR**

MONKEYMAN & O'BRIEN #2

LEGEND/DARK HORSE When weird frog-like aliens want to attack earth and turn it into a gigantic swamp for their carnal pleasure, Monkeyman and O'Brien are off to the rescue. What can they do? Well, put O'Brien in a skimpy little bikini, get some other babes and start the mud wrestling. If that doesn't keep the froggies occupied, they might as well be dead. By Arthur Adams. **$2.95**

PREACHER #18

VERTIGO/DC Y'know that lighter that Jessie's always carrying around with him? The one he got from his father? Ever wonder what the true story is behind it? Well, in this ish you'll find out. A Vietnam veteran tells the tale of Jesse's father John Custer and his infamous battle at Khe San. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **$2.50 MR**

PREACHER SPECIAL: SAINT OF KILLERS #3 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC Still pissed off over the death of his family, the Saint of Killers takes a trip to hell to blow some big freakin' holes in the Devil's head. Will Lucifer be able to stop this killing machine or will he curl up and start screaming like a little schoolgirl on helium? Either way, don't expect this ish to be short on violence. By Garth Ennis and Steve Pugh. **$2.50 MR**

ROBIN #34

DC COMICS Robin and some buds take a trip to check out a Shakespeare performance, but forsooth, things doth be amiss! Them wacky Shakespearean actors ain't all they're cracked up to be. When some of them get a little rowdy, Robin's gotta swing into action and school them in the performance of martial arts. By Chuck "Romeo" Dixon, Jennifer "Juliet" Graves and John "Hey...these things are snug" Dell. **$1.95**

KINGDOM COME #4

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #85

PREACHER #18

PREACHER SPECIAL: SAINT OF KILLERS #3

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #43

VERTIGO/DC "Phantom of the Fair," Part 3 (of 4). The Phantom ("Slam Evil!") of the World's Fair continues his killing spree, chopping up a very special friend of Wesley Dodds (a.k.a. Sandman). Bad move, Phantom ("Slam Evil!"). Sandman's gonna kick your ass. So while Wes is out trackin' the Phantom ("Slam Evil!"), Lt. Burke of the police department continues to investigate the murders. By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **$2.50 MR**

STARMAN #23

DC COMICS "Sand and Stars," Part 4 (of 4). Starman and the Golden Age Sandman are racing against time to find...Nobody. (Any relation to Not Me of the Family Circus?) Anyway, this Nobody plans on killing all the spectators at an air show, so it's up to Starman and Sandman to beat this Nobody into nothin'. Huh? By James Robinson, Tony Harris, Wade Von Grawbadger and Guy Davis. **$2.25**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE (VOL. 3) #1

HOMAGE COMICS Francine, Katchoo and the whole crew are back under the new Homage banner. And guess what? They're in full color! This'll give a whole new outlook on the characters (and maybe find out if Katchoo is a natural blonde). This ish will also have Jim Lee drawing a superhero dream sequence. It's a great title, folks. Go out and give it a try. By Terry Moore, who says, "This is one I'm right in the middle of writing. At this point I'm not sure what I'm gonna do. I had it all in my head and knew exactly what I was going to do...but then I thought, you know, maybe I'm gonna do something completely different." **$2.75**

STRAY BULLETS #10

EL CAPITÁN Caught between the mob, the cops and a bunch of nymphomaniac clowns (now that sounds interesting), Amy Racecar is in for some serious trouble. And to top it all off, God starts to talk to her. How's that for a rough day at the office? By David Lapham. **$2.95**

MORE PICKS

SUPERBOY #32

DC COMICS King Shark is back! And instead of getting really good views of people in reeeally teeny bathing suits, he goes off and picks a fight with Superboy. Y'know, sharks really do have small brains. Brought to you by Ron Marz, Ramon Bernado and Doug Hazlewood. Marz says, "We start to plant the seeds for the future in this issue. We begin some subplots both in Superboy's personal and heroic life that will culminate in the next few issues. Before I'm done with the first arc of stories he'll be put through the ringer. He'll very literally be hammered down so he can be built back up. He's got some choppy seas ahead, but it's going to be a fun trip." **$1.95**

SUPREME #41

IMAGE Supreme decided he needed some time off, so he hung out in space for about a year. He didn't think anything really terrible could happen to the world in that short amount of time. Boy, was he wrong! While he was gone, a bunch of fake Supremes sprung up to take his place, causing some big problems. And the Earth's in danger of being torn in two! It's gonna be a rough day. Alan Moore joins the crew of Joe Bennet and Norm Rapmund, which should spice this book up quite a bit. **$2.50**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #14

MARVEL It's gonna be a hot time in the old town as Spidey takes on the Scorcher again ('Member him from issue #1?) Well, he's back, and in typical supervillain fashion is out to settle the score. Our bet's on Spidey planting his spider-bootie in the Scorcher's butt. By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Vey. **99 CENTS**

WILDC.A.T.S #32

IMAGE The war between the C.A.T.s and the criminals of New York rages on with no end in sight. To save what's left of the city, the fighting's gotta stop. Luckily, Maxine figures something out that gives both sides a new outlook on the situation. By Alan Moore, Jim Lee and Richard Bennett. **$2.50** W

STARMAN #23

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #14

AT A GLANCE!

A listing of the high-profile books shipping in August

Action Comics #726 (DC) Superman's gotta fight a big ol' meanie called Barrage, who's terrorizing Metropolis. **$1.95**

Adventures of Superman #539 (DC) Superman's gotta fight a big ol' meanie called Anomaly, who's terrorizing Metropolis. **$1.95**

Amazing Spider-Man #416 (Marvel) He took a lickin', but Spidey's still tickin' after Onslaught's rampage. Can he handle being one of the only remaining superheroes? **$1.50**

Ash: The Fire Within #2 (Event) Ash and Adam go toe-to-toe for one last battle that will determine the future of the Earth. **$2.95**

Cable #36 (Marvel) Cable survived Onslaught, but will he be able to survive the techno-virus that's wreaking havoc on his body? **$1.95**

Deathblow/Wolverine #1 (Image) Ancient evil spirits are being released and it's up to Deathblow and Wolverine to put them back in their places. **$2.50**

DV8 #1 (Image) Ivana's new Gen-active team takes up residence in Manhattan and finds out how much trouble having superpowers can be. **$2.50**

Gen #13A-C (Image) The kids get in some major trouble, but they get to meet 13 other cool characters like Spawn, Bone, Shi, Hellboy, Francine and Katchoo from *Strangers in Paradise* and more! **$1.30 (each)**

Incredible Hulk #446 (Marvel) The world's pissed off the Hulk again by blaming him for the FF and Avengers' disappearances, so Hulk's rampagin'. **$1.50**

Onslaught: Marvel Universe (Marvel) The Avengers, FF and Iron Man take a shot at kicking Onslaught's ass. **$3.95**

Sensational Spider-Man #9 (Marvel) Is it a boy? Is it a girl? Something with eight legs? Find out what Mary Jane gave birth to. **$1.95**

Spawn #53 (Image) Spawn fights his way to the eighth level of Hell, hoping to kill his creator Malebolgia. **$1.95**

Spectacular Spider-Man #239 (Marvel) Spidey's gotta fight the Lizard all over again, but this time the Lizard's intelligent. **$1.50**

Spider-Man #73 (Marvel) Spidey's gotta stop a new bad guy called Fortunato from destroying everything Onslaught didn't. **$1.95**

Superman #116 (DC) Superman takes on the Daxamite (the guy with powers equal to Supes) in a crucial battle. **$1.95**

Superman: The Man of Steel #61 (DC) A new villain named Riot challenges Supes to a fight **$1.95**

Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #6 (DC) Supes must deal with the Jackal, a vigilante whose methods the Big "S" doesn't agree with. **$1.95**

Tomoe/Witchblade: Fire Sermon #1 (Crusade) Tomoe and Witchblade team up to stop someone from stealing some sacred objects. **$3.95**

Uncanny X-Men #337 (Marvel) The X-Men must deal with Bastion and his cronies. **$1.95**

X-Files #21 (Topps) Mulder must save Scully from an evil incubus that's draining her life energy. **$2.95**

X-Men #57 (Marvel) Bastion's forces come crashing down around the heads of the X-people, forcing them to flee for their lives. **$1.95**

X-Men: The Rise of Apocalypse #1 (Marvel) The origin of Apocalypse is finally revealed within these pages. **$1.95** W

Don't Be Left Out!

Ice Age™ is ending and we
will not print any more cards . . .
not even if you ask nicely.
So get it now before it's gone forever!

ICE AGE™

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THE TOY CHEST

PLAYMATES ANNOUNCES NEW ADDITIONS AND POSTPONEMENTS

Playmates makes the big news this month with a number of additions to various action figure lines and postponements of others, as well as a heated brouhaha over the availability of a certain Star Trek figure. The controversy began when Playmates decided to issue several characters from the Star Trek line with a limited production of only 1,701 pieces—the odd amount in homage to the U.S.S. Enterprise's ship identification number. The first figure produced at the 1,701 limit was Capt. Picard from the "Tapestry" episode. Two additional figures were announced: Lt. Tasha Yar from the "Yesterday's Enterprise" episode and Lt. Reginald Barclay from "Projections."

Once the details of the Picard "Tapestry" figure became common knowledge, an uproar protesting the low production resounded throughout the organized action figure hobby world. The hubbub heightened when the asking price on the secondary market for the Picard figure quickly escalated to the $300-$500 range. A transaction involving $700 was even reported! Those hobby retailers in the know estimated that the Picard "Tapestry" figure was being packaged at a rate of no less than one per 20 cases.

Playmates, taken aback by the vehement objections, explained that the low production run was merely to generate collector interest. Nevertheless, the negative feedback persisted to the point where one collector expressed his dissatisfaction by sending Playmates a charred and mutilated Picard "Tapestry" figure.

To appease collectors, the toy manufacturer announced that the number of Barclay "Projections" figures would be increased to 3,000 pieces (while the production amount for Tasha Yar will stay at 1,701). However, many collectors feel that number is still much too low. Having learned its lesson, Playmates has no further plans for releases of such a limited nature.

Check out this nifty Flash Gordon in Flight Suit (left) and Kobalt the Mercenary

BACK TO SCHOOL

Despite the "Tapestry" Picard mess, Star Trek collectors are eagerly anticipating the September release of the Starfleet Academy assortment, which depicts the Next Generation crew as young Starfleet cadets. Check out the young Picard figure...with hair! Each figure retails for $9.99 and comes packaged with a special CD-ROM featuring interactive Starfleet Academy lessons and cadet biographies for each character. The first series will include LaForge in Tech Repair Suit, Picard in Flight Training Suit, Riker in Geo-Hazard Suit and Worf in Commando Scout Suit. What, no Wesley?

The controversial Trek figures (l. to r.): "Tapestry" Picard and Tasha Yar

Be on the lookout for the following accessories: A life-size Dr. McCoy's Medical Kit ($14.99) and the Galileo Shuttlecraft with an exclusive Capt. Kirk figure ($24.99) are both due out in late summer. The previously announced Kazon Fighter Ship with an exclusive Kazon figure as well as a 30th Anniversary Bridge Playset have both been indefinitely postponed.

"FIRST CONTACT" PREVIEW

Die-hard Trekkies are anxiously waiting the November release of the second "Star Trek: The Next Generation" motion picture, subtitled "First Contact." Figures based on the movie will hit the shelves in October. This lineup is to include the entire crew in new Starfleet attire: Picard, Riker, Data, LaForge, Crusher, Troi and Worf...plus a nasty Borg figure. Additionally, Playmates will release the new U.S.S. Enterprise and Borg ships to be unveiled in "First Contact."

ZORRO SLASHED

Playmates' plans for a Zorro action figure line have hit a snag, thanks to directorial problems involving the movie (Starring "Desperado" actor

BY DAN ALBAUGH

Antonio Banderas!) intended for release in the spring of 1997. If the movie is a go, Playmates will introduce the line.

FLASH! HE'LL SAVE EVERY ONE OF US!

Flash Gordon, one of science fiction's most famous spacefaring heroes, is back with an updated look for the '90s. The new Flash Gordon action figure line rockets into action in late August and ties in with a new animated TV series debuting this fall. Also on the slate for 1997 is a brand-new motion picture adaptation of the classic character. Eight figures will make up the initial Flash Gordon character assortment, including Flash Gordon in Flight Suit, Flash Gordon in Mongo Outfit, Dale Arden (heroine), Prince Talon (good-guy captain), Princess Thundar (powerful Lionid warrior), Ming the Merciless, General Lynch (Ming's stooge), and Kobalt the Mercenary (Pantheron hunter). All figures will have an approximate $6.99 retail price tag.

Complementing the Flash Gordon line is the Trihibian, Flash's land, air and sea vehicle. There's also the Rebel Air Bike that comes complete with an exclusive Flash Gordon action figure. And rounding out the group is Ming's command center of evil, the Jaws of Death Throne. Each piece retails for $9.99.

Due in 1997 is the Starblazer ($21.99), Flash's three-foot-long vessel that features an inflating mega-rocket and detachable escape pod. Ming's Megaraptor ($18.99), also set for release next year, is an impressive vehicle with turret-launched weapons and a luminous targeting system.

EARTHWORM JIM PLANS GROUNDED

Citing the need to re-evaluate the market, Playmates has indefinitely postponed the release of new figures from the Earthworm Jim line. At Toy Fair '96, the manufacturer had announced that nine figures from the line were supposed to hit the store shelves in June. The postponed figures include Chuck & Fifi, Copterhead Jim, Evil Jim, Extendo-Arm Jim, Hamstinator, Professor Monkey for a Head, Queen Slug for a Butt, Samurai Jim and Transforming Peter Puppy. Also scrapped were the following Earthworm Jim accessories: Jim's Cycle, Plasma Blaster and Worm Thrower.

HOLDING ON 21

Playmates' 21 action figure line, originally scheduled for a July release, has been delayed until late summer of 1997. 21 is based on the popular Top Cow comic (and forthcoming Film Roman animated series) which features heroes battling tyranny in the year 2345. Production problems with the TV series forced Playmates to put the line on hold.

Six figures were to make up the initial assortment—21 (ultimate battle robot), Ultra 21 (cybernetic super-warrior), Scrap (teen mechanic), Tristan Harris (cybernetics scientist), Forex (cybernetic enforcer) and Combat Robot (cybernetic shock trooper). In addition, the line would have included four vehicles—Harris' Hatchback Coupe, Prime Surveillance Craft, Forex's Air Bike and Scrap's Air Bike.

HASBRO LAUNCHES INTO CYBERSPACE

In other news, Hasbro Toy Group, maker of such popular toy collections as G.I. Joe, Star Wars, Batman and Beast Wars, has announced that collectors can now head for cyberspace to find the latest skinny on all their favorite toys. The new Hasbro site on the World Wide Web, http://www.hasbrotoys.com, offers information and photos of such popular Hasbro and Kenner offerings as Action Man (who also has his own Website at http://www.actionman.com), G.I. Joe Extreme, and the G.I. Joe Classic Collection. Star Wars, Batman-related action figures and Beast Wars will all have listings in the Website in the future. Currently, the site's "Cool Stuff" page allows users to view certain figures in an interactive 3-D environment using QuickTime VR—this enables Web-browsers to download images for close-up, 3-D, 360-degree views of each figure. The "Frequently Asked Questions" page has all the latest information on Hasbro's various toy lines, including figure availability. Consumers can even e-mail their questions to Hasbro though the "Talk to Us" section. Now that's interactive! **W**

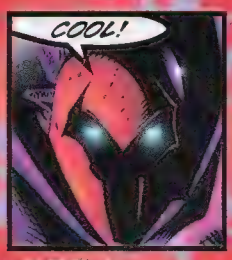
Dan Albaugh does not condone mutilating action figures to make political statements. However, he does enjoy the buzz from melted plastic.

Scrap from Playmates' "21" line, based on the Top Cow comic series

WISH LIST

THE 10 ACTION FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

(AND YOU)



1) Onslaught (X-Men)
Towering over the standard Toy Biz figures, Onslaught'll come with light-up eyes, and just like the Toy Biz Hulk II, has a U! hatch in his back where you can fit an evil lookin' Prof. X figure (included, of course)!

2) Amalgam (DC/Marvel)
The heroes from the Marvel/DC Amalgam universe are still garnering massive requests from drooling fans. Leading the list are Dark Claw, Super Soldier and Spider-Boy.

3) X-Man (X-Men)
U!'s alternate-timeline teen Cable (Cut that?) debuts high on the charts with light-up eyes and glow-in-the-dark snap-on psychic fist and psychic shield, kinda like Toy Biz's (remember?) snap-on ice-hands.

4) Princess Leia in Slave Outfit (Star Wars)
Making more appearances on the Top 10 than any other figure to date is: "I had to lose a lot of weight for the third flick" Leia, complete with that cute li'l birthmark on her right hip and removable choker-chain and collar.

5) Grand Admiral Thrawn (Star Wars)
The head of the Imperial fleet after the Emperor and Darth bit it (as chronicled by Timothy Zahn in the *Heir to the Empire*, *Dark Force Rising* and *The Last Command* series of Star Wars novels), this guy would come equipped with snap-on ysalamiri "Force-nullifying" furry snakes.

6) Witchblade (Mattel)
The figure of Top Cow's insanely popular heroine comes with red hair (like McFarlane Toys' Cosmic Angela), a removable Witchblade gauntlet with retractable, glow-in-the-dark blade and authentic "Hey, those real?" cleavage.

7) Kingdom Come (DC Heroes)
Moving up the charts are requests for the classic older-looking DC characters from the hit mini-series. Leading with the most requests are Superman, Batman (and the Bat Bots!), Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and the Flash.

8) Mystique (X-Men)
In her classic white suit—not that crappy X-Factor uniform. Toss in interchangeable pop-off heads for Rogue, Storm, Jean Grey and Psylocke and you've got a figure 10 times cooler than that dopey Morph figure.

9) Daredevil (Marvel Heroes)
Ignoring the horrible DD figure Toy Biz put out way back when, this guy will look good and kick around the bad guys with his spring-loaded billy-club throwing action. Bonus: The billy club will be billy-club-size, not bazooka-size.

10) Elektra (Marvel Heroes)
Whoa, Daredevil is getting popular. How else do you explain requests for an Elektra figure? Decked out in her red suit with a full head of hair, she'd have a twin set of sai blades with a spring-loaded karate kick to catch unsuspecting Bullseye figures in the noggin.

Hey! Since we started this column months ago, five figures we've listed that we think should be made are currently in production! Your vote can make a difference! Drop us a note at:

c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920
Or e-mail us at WizardTGTC@aol.com.

DRAWING BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the show for **Wizard Readers' Art**

The four fine folks whose artwork got an honorable mention this month will each receive a *Groo* (Image) #4 signed by Sergio Aragonés and a *Batman* #509 signed by Mike Manley. Each of the three rad runners-up scores a *Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm and Such* #5 signed by Tim Truman, an *Assassins* #1 signed by D.G. Chichester and a *Starman* #18 signed by James Robinson. The Grand Prize winner runs away with all those goodies *plus* a piece of original Onslaught art from the Fleer/SkyBox Marvel Ultra: Onslaught set by Mike Deodato Jr., courtesy of Fleer/SkyBox International—thanks a ton, people! Congrats to all artists!

THE BOOTY

GRAND PRIZE

PLASTIC MAN **Kelly Mark Delcambre** New Iberia, LA

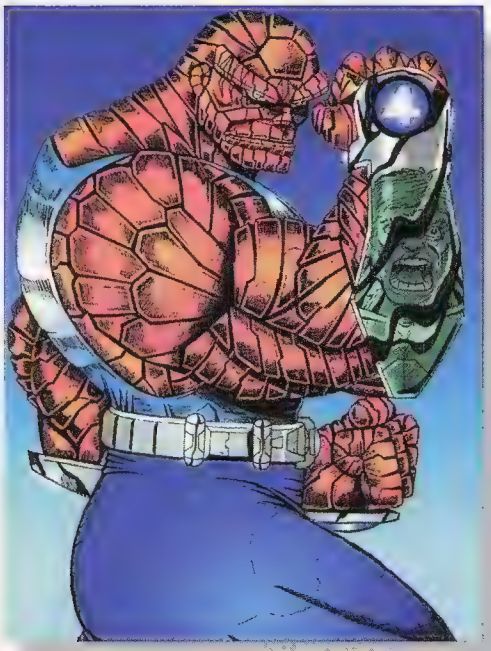
RUNNERS-UP

FREEFALL **Les Heiserman** Spearfish, SD

CATWOMAN **T.J. Frias & Randall Ng** San Jose, CA

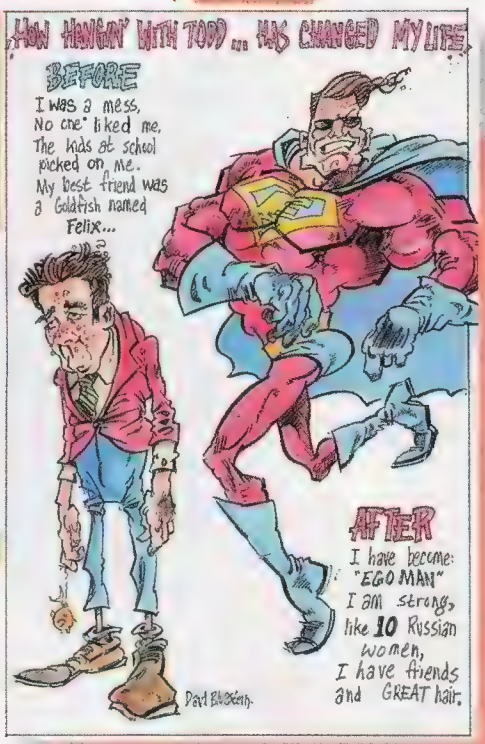
PROFESSOR X **Jared Boyer** Westminster, MD

HONORABLE MENTIONS

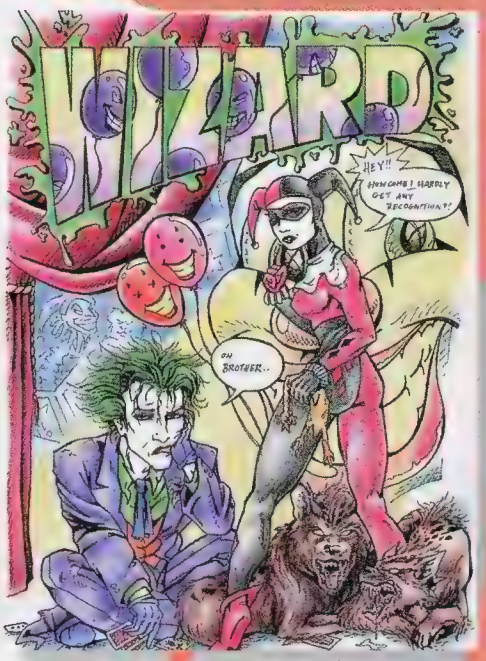


THING VS. HULK
Paul P. Smart
Inglewood, CA

EGO MAN
David Bluestein
(The winner of Wizard #50's "Hanging with Todd" contest!)
Thornhill, Ontario, Canada



EVIL ERNIE
Rudy Mirelez
Madera, CA



JOKER & HARLEY
Tonya Bennett
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Want your art to appear on one of these three pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your Drawing Board entries to:

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

Entries can be e-mailed to WizardTGTC@aol.com (please use an EPS or TIFF format @ 300 dpi). And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. If you do not write your full name, address and telephone number on the back of your entry, it will be disqualified. All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Press. Employees of Wizard Press are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? Good luck!

BY JOYCE M. STEEL

Thy Cards Be Done!

Hot on the heels of the white-hot DC Comics series *Kingdom Come*, this month Fleer/Skybox is putting forth a 60-card set based on the Mark Waid/Alex Ross entirely painted DC Comics series. With art from the soon-to-be-classic comic series, as well as new stuff exclusive to the card set, *Kingdom Come Extra* is a keeper!

Kingdom Come Extra's five levels of chase cards include: 15 Sketchboard cards (1 per pack) featuring previously viewed and brand spankin' new Ross art; three Kingdom Come Unfolded cards (1:3), fold-out posters bearing the cover art from issues one through three of the comic; three Kingdom Come Classics (1:9) featuring the first appearance covers of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman as they appeared in the original comics, six Creator Collection cards with original Ross art exclusive to the set (1:9); and Autographed cards (1:180) hand-signed by Alex Ross or writer Mark Waid (8 cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

Also from Fleer/Skybox this month: *Marvel Motion* redefines "high-end." This hobby-only series features 30 lenticular animation cards each depicting a Marvel Comics character utilizing the technology from movies like "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" to accomplish the animated motion effect. Only four SkyMotion cards chase the series (1:18 packs), but the set itself is practically one gigantic chase card. It better be—since the suggested retail price for these whopping two-card packs is $4.99!

CCG UPDATE

One of the last hurrahs in Fleer/SkyBox's year-long "30 Years of Star Trek" shindig is the release this month of the first classic Trek collectible card game, appropriately titled *Star Trek: The Card Game*. Playing it is like directing your own "Star Trek" episode! The 308-card initial series takes footage from the original TV series and is broken down into 65-card starter decks retailing at $8.95. The 15-card booster packs go for $2.95 apiece.

Meanwhile, Wildstorm unveils *Image Universe*, the second expansion set for its *WildStorms* CCG. As the name implies, the whole founding cast of Image creators (Lee, McFarlane, Liefeld, Valentino, Larsen and Silvestri) are contributing to the 200-card series with art from their most popular books, including "classics" like *Spawn*, *Youngblood*, *CyberForce* and *WetWorks*, along with newer comics like *Angela*, *Witchblade*, *New Men* and *Freak Force*. Chasing the series are nine gold foil cards.

"STRANGER" THINGS ARE HAPPENING...

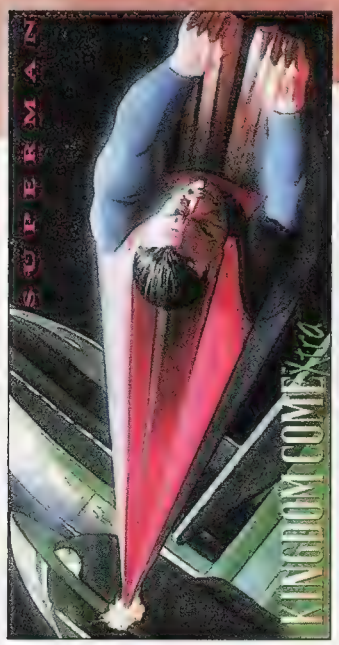
...and it's about time, too! *Strangers in Paradise*, that crazy, emotional, real-life depictin' book from Terry Moore's Abstract Studios, is finally getting the card series it and its fans deserve! The 90-card series from Comic Images is in full color (*Bone* cover colorist Elizabeth Lewis is doing the honors), with chase cards including six Chromium Cards, 500 Terry Moore Autographed Cards, a 3-card subset and a box bonus card.

HURRAY FOR HOLLYWOOD

The award for this month's coolest chase card idea goes to Kitchen Sink Press, unveiling a set based on "The Crow: City of Angels" in July. The 90-card series tells the film's story, part of which revolves around a painting one of the characters creates. Fans who find the card depicting that painting (inserted at a rate of one per case) can redeem it for a limited edition print of the painting. Three additional chase levels include 10 different temporary tattoos (1 per pack), 10 embossed portrait cards and six "Crowmium" cards (8 cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.79).

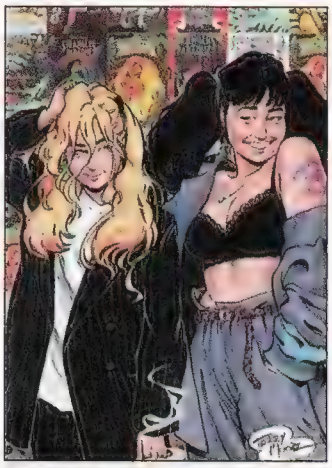
And on the small screen scene, Topps will unsurprisingly release a series based on the third season of "The X-Files" in August. The 72-card set features stills from the show along with newly-painted Thom Ang and Cliff Neilson art. Chase cards include six etched foil comic cover cards painted by Miran Kim, two holograms and two "Finest Paranormal" cards (9 cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.50). W

Joyce Steel knows when to hold 'em, knows when to fold 'em, knows when to walk away, knows when to run...



"Better clear out of here before Green Lantern sees what I did to his toilet." Fleer/SkyBox's *Kingdom Come* set.

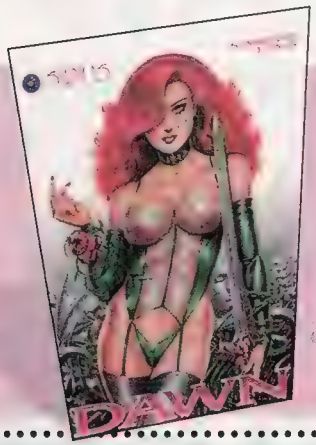
"Mr. Scott, please be so kind as to beam my pants back on." Fleer/SkyBox classic Trek CCG.



"Say...that pantsless Vulcan over there is looking pretty good. Shame we're lesbians." Comic Images' *Strangers in Paradise* set.

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are July's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS



1. DAWN #1

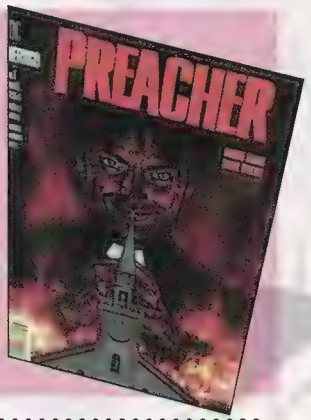
WRITER: Joseph Michael Linsner ARTIST: Joseph Michael Linsner

Riddle me this, fanboy! What do "Star Trek" 's Commander Riker and *Dawn* #1 have in common? They're both Number One! However, that overweight Hair Club for Men member Riker has nothing on this Bad Girl. How'd she get here? Well, with Linsner's beautifully painted art, combined with a storyline involving Dawn and some guy named Darrian who takes a bloody trip through Heaven, fans just can't seem to get enough of this book. If they can find it, that is! Kudos to that Linsner guy—and none for that alien-dissection advocate Riker.

2. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis ARTIST: Steve Dillon

What if God quit? Hey, isn't that the name of that Joan Osborne tune? Anyway, that's exactly what happens here, and it's up to Reverend Jesse Custer to search for the man upstairs to find out just what the hell's going on. Garth Ennis' violent and bizarre story is amassing converts every day to his tale of this hard-drinking holy-roller. Not only that, but this Ennis guy is on a virtual writing rampage. Among the other titles he's writing are *Hitman, Medieval Spawn/Witchblade* and *Saint of Killers*—all of which include some sacrilegious and heretical behavior. Somebody stop this man lest he single-handedly destroys all of Christendom! Waitaminnit, then we could sleep in on Sundays. Never mind.



3. WOLVERINE #100

WRITER: Larry Hama

ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Dan Green

Just getting a filling at the dentist is enough to make most of us go screaming into the night like little schoolgirls. But just try and imagine getting all of your bones coated with adamantium. Now *that's* enough to drive any mutant into a regressive feral physical and mental state (though that doesn't explain where his nose went). But while Wolvie may have rejected the adamantium, the multitudes of howling fanboys didn't reject this issue, making it the hottest, well, okay, *third* hottest book on the planet. (Hey, Marvel—give Wolvie some implants, slap a pair of panties and a bra on 'im and, BOOM, you'd have the #1 slot! And just think of the action figure possibilities…)

NUMBER THREE

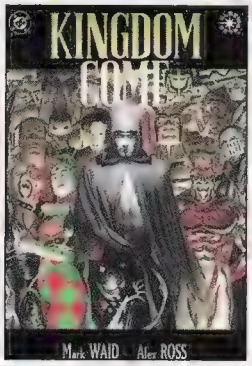
NUMBER FOUR

4. THE X-FILES #1

WRITER: Stefan Petrucha

ARTIST: Charles Adlard

You have Malcolm X, Mister X, the X-Men and all the X-titles, your cynical Generation X, big X baseball caps and "Project X" (y'know, that movie with Ferris Bueller and the monkey). When we go to the doctor, we get an X-ray. When you find one o' those treasure maps, X marks the spot. And then there's *The X-Files*, that spawned-off-of-the-TV-show comic that follows two seemingly witless FBI agents as they uncover…nothing. Maybe it's us, but we just don't get it.



NUMBER FIVE

5. KINGDOM COME #1

WRITER: Mark Waid
ARTIST: Alex Ross

"Superman is outdated and shallow? Gritty, homicidal superheroes are the norm? *That's* news?" No, silly, we're not talking about the state of the comics biz today. We're talkin' about the plot to *Kingdom Come*, the new Elseworlds mini-series that gives us a possible look into the future of the DC Universe. Sound neat? Translate neat to super-hot when you slap the likes of Mark Waid and Alex Ross on this baby.

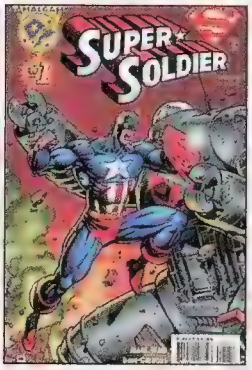
6. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl and Brian Haberlin
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Hey, can Sara Pezzini accessorize or what? Skintight skimpy dress, hip boots and the Witchblade. Now that's a combination straight from Milan. In fact, she could probably give ol' Waspie, Janet Van Dyne, a run for her money! This Bad Girl cop not only accessorizes well, but kicks drug-dealing and organized-crime butt in this first issue. Man, what a woman! And that's not all. You wanna talk rare? This issue is rarer than good-looking cops in skimpy dresses…in the real world, that is.

NUMBER SIX

7. SUPER-SOLDIER #1



NUMBER SEVEN

WRITER: Mark Waid
ARTIST: Dave Gibbons

What's the skinny on this? An Amalgam title in the Top 10 and it doesn't even have an X in the title? Super-Soldier is the "amalgam" of the two biggest Boy Scouts in any universe—Superman and Captain America—and he's out to slam evil in the form of that evil Lex Luthor and Hydra. Of course, this issue might not be here if it weren't for the creative amalgam of Mark Waid and Dave Gibbons. (Mave Wibbons?) These two made this issue way cool! The only uncool thing is there's no second issue in sight. Curses!

NUMBER EIGHT

8. DC VERSUS MARVEL #1

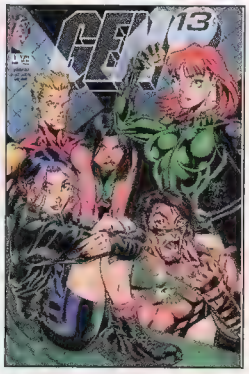
WRITER: Ron Marz
ARTISTS: Jurgens, Rubinstein, Castellini & Neary

Before we reached puberty, we used to dream of battles between the Marvel and DC pantheons, thinking they'd remain just that, a dream. So pinch us, 'cause it finally happened. Many a crazed fanboy must've been waiting for this as well, because this issue's hot! So what if each battle only lasted a couple of frames and the Sub-Mariner lost to Aquaman? At least we saw 'em together, and with another DC/Marvel mini-series hitting this October, we may just see some o' these battles given justice. Here's hopin'!

9. GEN[13] #1 (Reg. Series)

WRITERS: Brandon Choi and J. Scott Campbell
ARTISTS: B. Choi, J.S. Campbell & A. Garner

They're back! Arched backs, video games and butt-nekkid swimming! No, we're not talking about a "Diff'rent Strokes" reunion. It's those damn Gen[13] kids. Just when you think you'll never see 'em in the Top 10 again, BAM, they're back like a bad case of athlete's foot. You just can't shake 'em off. But who'd want to? In this issue, you've got five teens with cool powers, one of the most popular creative teams today and four freaks out to snatch a little Qeelocke (Hey, get your mind outta the gutter!). What's not to like?



NUMBER NINE

10. LADY DEATH: B.H.A.H. #1

WRITER: Brian Pulido
ARTIST: Steven Hughes

That darn Purgatori! Here's poor innocent Lady Death confined to Hell, and Purgatori's trying to make her believe she's evil. So what if she's responsible for the deaths of 80 million people—she's just misunderstood. Hey, she had a bad childhood, what with her dad being an evil murdering sorcerer and all. You know, if there were social workers in medieval times instead of those evil demons and holier-than-thou witch-burners, Lady Death would have grown up emotionally well-adjusted. Heck, she probably would've became a nice respectable alchemist or somethin'. We blame society.

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. PREACHER #2 DC
12. SHI #1 CRUSADE
13. ANGELA #1 IMAGE
14. HITMAN #1 DC
15. LADY DEATH: THE ODYSSEY #1 CHAOS!
16. AVENGELYNE #1 IMAGE
17. WITCHBLADE #2 IMAGE
18. SPAWN #9 IMAGE
19. GENERATION X #1 MARVEL
20. SPAWN #1 IMAGE

Harris Comics Presents:

The "In the Studio" Contest

Picture this: There you are, a struggling artist. You're sitting in art class, sketchbook and pencil in hand, waiting for the class' live model of the day to walk in...and here she comes—Vampirella! Imagine getting a chance to draw Vampirella herself! Okay, quit imagining and get drawing, 'cause you just might get your chance!

Now How Am I A-gonna Do That?

If you think you're up to the challenge, draw Vampirella! But we don't want any comicy-type drawing. Draw your best realistic, life-like picture of Vampirella and send it in. Use inks, pencils or whatever medium you want. The best artist (as judged by our Harris Comics buddies) will get a chance to draw the real Vampi!

The BOOTY

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will get to hang out with Harris Comics' real-life Vampirella model and some Harris artists for a studio session to draw Vampirella! And…the winner's drawing will be printed as a pin-up in an upcoming issue of *Vengeance of Vampirella!*

But wait—That's not all! You'll also get a copy of *Vengeance of Vampirella #25* (the limited gold foil edition) and a copy of the *Vampirella: Death & Destruction* limited preview ashcan, and *both* will be signed by artists Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti.

Amanda persuades Jimmy into seeing things her way.

Even if you're a schlub, you might win one of our swell runner-up deals:

Second Prize (10): Ten other readers whose art is still pretty damn good will each receive a copy of the *Vengeance of Vampirella #25* limited gold foil edition signed by Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti.

Third Prize (20): Twenty readers who still make the grade will each receive a copy of the *Vampirella: Death & Destruction* limited preview ashcan signed by Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti.

This month's contest is sponsored by Harris Comics, and we think they're real swell.

Fill this blood-sucker out, put it an envelope and send to: "In the Studio" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Legal Studio Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Harris Comics and their immediate families or Bram Stoker. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach it to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "In the Studio" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Boy, don'tcha think that poor model will be a bit chilly in that funky costume get-up? All entries must be received at contest headquarters by September 30, 1996. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity by Wizard Press and Harris Comics. Judging will take place on October 15, 1996.
For a list of winners, available after October 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "In the Studio" Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

In the Studio Entry Form

DEADLINE IS SPETEMBER 30, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

by Jon Warren

ONSLAUGHT IS HERE!

Now that we all know who Onslaught really is, the controversy over his first appearance continues to rage. Is it *X-Men* #25, which features the possible origin of Onslaught (where Professor X mindwipes Magneto, forming the Onslaught "personality"), or is it that sneaky little cameo in *X-Man* #15, or is it possible that *X-Men* #53 may be the first full appearance? Though the first Onnie cameo is in *X-Men* #49, his first full comic book appearance has been confirmed as *X-Men* #53. So far, these books have been selling tremendously well—so if you're planning on picking up any of them, get them while you can. All Onslaught appearances are listed in the Price Guide, so check 'em out.

CLONE GOLD DEAD

The year-long Spider-Man Clone Saga pleased no one with its hero-switching climax, and the ensuing months haven't made things any better.

This is the summer of Onslaught, who's burning up the market

Spidey sales are down and back issue sales for the clone story are nonexistent. Marvel has revealed that it will be placing Peter Parker back into the Spider-suit come October. Hopefully, the clone story didn't do too much damage, and this move will place Spidey back issues (and current ones) back into the good graces of comic fans.

THE DAWN OF DAWN

You heard it here first! *Continüm* #1 is not the first Dawn. This is straight from the horse's mouth, Dawn creator Joe Linsner! Todd McDevitt of New Dimension Comics in Cranberry Township, Pa., did some legwork for us. Says Todd, "*Continüm Presents* #1 features a four-page story with a woman that looks like Dawn and has three tears on her face [just like Dawn]. I called Joe Linsner to find out what the deal was. That short story is *not* a Dawn appearance. Joe admits that one of his artistic traits is that all of his women look similar, but says the girl in that story is *not* Dawn. Her first appearance is in *Cry for Dawn* #1." Well, hey, we called up Joe Linsner our-

The Quick List — What's Hot in the Comic Book Market

• BATMAN BLACK & WHITE—Everyone expected this title to be really interesting, but hardly anybody expected it to be amazing! But it was, and now it is hot, hot, hot!

• CAPTAIN AMERICA—With the impending Liefeld makeover in the wings, everybody wants Cap back issues. The Waid/Garney stories are hot (#444-#454), and now there's interest in the Stern/Byrne issues from the '80s (#247-#255) and even the original Jack Kirby Cap stories from the '60s.

• GIRL CRAZY—Gilbert Hernandez goes back to his science fiction roots for this series about teenage girls in the future. Back issues are scarce, but are cheap—for now. (And check it out—this may be the only comic *ever* where guys are hot for a girl because her breasts are *small*!)

• HITMAN—This title shows no signs of cooling off, and back issues are becoming extremely hard to find.

• ONSLAUGHT—All of the X-titles currently feature the threat of Onslaught and will soon build into a world-shaking climax. Early indications say "Onslaught" will turn out to be the most popular and collectable "crisis" storyline of them all.

• PREACHER—Still steaming is this offbeat title. One correspondent said no one could believe this book would sell well, so *every* retailer underordered the first three or four issues.

• SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE—Buzz is picking up for this offbeat and intriguing treatment of the Golden Age Vertigo hero, even though it's been around for a few years now (his recent Starman crossover could be one reason). The earlier back issues are becoming hot, but are still available at reasonable prices.

• VAMPS—A sexy, scary Vertigo comic book with realistic characterization amidst some truly weird stuff. With the second mini-series just finished up, and a third planned, this is a comic just waiting to take off.

• WITCHBLADE—This series is just plain smokin', pure and simple. See the mainbar for why.

• THE X-FILES—This comic is more than keeping pace with the TV show in terms of weirdness and may be surpassing it in terms of popularity. Demand for this title just won't stop!

WIZARD'S TOP 10 HOTTEST WRITERS

1. **Garth Ennis** — *Preacher, Hitman*
2. **Mark Waid** — *Kingdom Come*
3. **Peter David** — *Hulk, Aquaman*
4. **Neil Gaiman** — *Sandman*
5. **Karl Kesel** — *Daredevil*
6. **Kurt Busiek** — *Astro City*
7. **Scott Lobdell** — *Generation X, Uncanny X-Men*
8. **Ron Marz** — *Green Lantern*
9. **James Robinson** — *Starman*
10. **Chuck Dixon** — *Robin, Detective Comics*

WIZARD'S TOP 10 HOTTEST ARTISTS

1. **Todd McFarlane** — *Spawn*
2. **Joe Madureira** — *Uncanny X-Men*
3. **Jim Lee** — *Upcoming: Fantastic Four*
4. **Alex Ross** — *Kingdom Come*
5. **J. Scott Campbell** — *Gen13*
6. **Billy Tucci** — *Shi*
7. **Joe Quesada** — *Ash*
8. **Joe Linsner** — *Dawn*
9. **Adam Kubert** — *Wolverine*
10. **Greg Capullo** — *Spawn*

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS AND ARTISTS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE RETAILER SURVEY.

WIZARD'S UP & COMING CREATOR

STEVE SKROCE

Having penciled *X-Man* for over a year, Skroce has a style that's reminiscent of Joe Quesada and Michael Golden with a hint of manga mixed in. He puts just the right amount of flash and number of panels on a page, and gives each character a unique look. All this makes him perfect for his upcoming jump onto *Amazing Spider-Man*. *X-Man* editor Jaye Gardner says, "In this past year, Steve's been concentrating on his storytelling—he's focused on cinematic layout and story structure—which I think brings the reader closer to the characters than typical comic storytelling."

selves and he confirmed this. Future listings in the Price Guide will reflect this information.

BABE WITH A BLADE!

All of a sudden, *Witchblade* is the hottest Image back issue. And guess what? She's not even part of Image anymore! (You did hear that Marc Silvestri's Top Cow studio broke away from Image last month, right?) Retailers from all over the country tell us that demand just keeps increasing. The good news is that prices are still reasonable—for now. But heavy convention sales during the summer will most likely drive prices up. Better buy your back issues now while they're still only *relatively* expensive!

SPAWNING RARITIES

Image's flagship character has hit the Big Five-Oh, an event that has generated interest in his back issues, particularly the hard-to-find #16-#25. And let's not forget that *Spawn* #50 marks the pencilling return of Todd McFarlane (even if only for that issue). The movie deal on Spawn is beginning to look more solid, and when that becomes a reality next summer, all back issues will really take off!

CLAWING ITS WAY BACK

Legends of the Dark Claw is *still* showing up regularly in our Top 10 voting, and we understand that fans are deluging Marvel and DC with demands that the Clawed Crusader get his own ongoing title. If you don't have a copy of this blazing hot issue, grab one now. It looks as if one of these days, it will be moving from the "one-shot" listing to the "first appearance" listing in our Price Guide! Also look for copies of the Superman-Captain America "combook" *Super-Soldier*—this meshing of two popular characters brought in a large load of readers. (See "Wizard News" for Amalgam tidbits.)

MARKET WATCHERS

Letters to the Price Guide

Q: I noticed an eight-page story drawn by Joe Madureira in *X-Factor Annual* #7, from 1992. Was this one of Joe's first works? Perhaps an abbreviation could be noted in the listings for completists.

Timothy Shea
Hamburg, NY

A: Joe Madureira's first published art was the back cover of *Marvel Comics Presents* #87, while his first interior work was a Mojo story in *Marvel Comics Presents* #89 (right), both done in 1991 at age 16 (!).

Q: How do you know it's time to change your bags and boards?

Mark Maver
Tucson, AZ

A: Polyethylene bags and regular cardboard backing boards will degrade with time; how long depends on the conditions in which they are stored. Hints on what to look for: Bags that become stiff or discolored, or turn cloudy; boards that discolor or begin to warp.

Here's some suggestions: You should replace polybags with Mylar. Even a low-grade, thin Mylar is safer than poly. Also, replace regular boards with "buffered" or non-degradable boards. And store cards in heavy-duty Mylar sleeves. Yes, these kinds of bags and boards cost a little more, but they are worth it in the long run to the serious collector. Not only do they last much longer, but they keep your comics in better shape. Remember, damage to bags or boards means damage to your comic!

Q: I have a *Whiz Comics* #2 (1940), and I was wondering if there were any reprints out there.

J.R. Corney
Amherst, NH

A: Yes, there was an oversized reproduction done in 1974 with an outer cover saying "Famous First Edition." If yours is twice the size of a regular comic, then it is the reprint. If it's not, then take it to a reputable retailer for evaluation. *Whiz* #2, *Action* #1, *Superman* #1, *Detective Comics* #27, *Batman* #1, *All Star* #3, *Flash Comics* #1 and *Sensation Comics* #1 were all done in these oversize reprints, and dishonest retailers, especially at places like flea markets, sell them as originals. Don't get ripped off!

By the way, a correction: In *Wizard* #59's "Market Watchers," we claimed there's been no reprint of *Showcase* #4. However, in 1992, DC released several reprints under the banner "Silver Age Classics," and *Showcase* #4 was one of them. Our apologies to D. Hicks Jr. and anyone else affected by this little screw-up!

Q: I have a set of mini-comics with Spider-Man, Hulk, Spider-Woman and Captain America (and Archie, but I didn't buy that one). They are the size of cards, and I was wondering why they aren't listed in the *Wizard* card section.

Kent Davis
Harrodsburg, KY

A: That Archie book was a Sabrina comic, Kent, which means you missed the best one of all. The set came out in 1980 and was sold in a wrapper, like cards. They received very limited distribution and you're lucky to have found them. As to listing them in our card guide, we'll consider it.

So long, folks—and keep sending in those questions and suggestions!

—Jon Warren
The Uatu of Prices

Got questions? Send 'em to:
Market Watchers
c/o Jon Warren
P. O. Box 2512
Chattanooga, TN 37409
Or send e-mail directly to the guy himself:
JonRWarren@aol.com

INDEPENDENTS DAY

Independent comics are where it's at! In our polls, titles like *Ash*, *Verotik*, *Razor*, *Creed*, *THB*, *The X-Files*, *Bone* and more keep outpolling mainstream titles as fan favorites. Yes, the limited print runs and spotty distribution make back issue collecting a pain in the butt, but the great stories and art are more than worth the trouble and expense. Besides, when you support independents, you're helping to nurture the next generation of hot artists and writers. And that helps the market.

NEWS OF THE MONTH

Tom Shea, of TJ Collectibles in Milford, Mass., sent us a lengthy letter on what's hot and what's not (and many retailers concur with his observations), including the "Contagion" Bat-storyline, which sold out in his area, meaning back issues will remain hot. Tom warns that Bad Girl books (except for *Dawn* and *Lady Death*) are cooling off, as are variant covers. As noted above, Clone Saga back issues are dead, but Green Goblin appearances are hot. Good buys: *Uncanny X-Men* #94-#130, #244 (first Jubilee) and #266 (first Gambit), *Incredible Hulk* #181 (first Wolverine), *Avengers Annual* #10 (first Rogue) and *Amazing Spider-Man* #50 (first Kingpin).

BUY BOOKS, LOTS OF BOOKS!

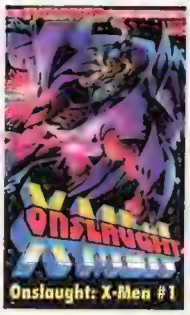
Hey, things are getting better in the industry, with both retailers and publishers alike coming out of a long slump, but many stores are *still* ordering only enough comics to take care of their regular customers. What this means is that hot books—and those which will become hot over time—will be in short supply on the back issue market, regardless of original print runs. So help yourself, help your local shop, help a publisher. If you think you might want it, or you think somebody else might want it someday, buy it *now*.

SURVEY SAYS...

In a recent survey, we asked retailers if we should keep the listings of Golden Age comics in *Wizard* or remove them to make room for more recent listings and titles. By a narrow margin, the vote was to keep the Golden Age in there. So we will for now. What do *you* think? On the survey at the end of the Price Guide section, cast your vote for keepin' them or killin' them. I'll let you know the results. Thanks! W

Please note: Southern P.R.I.C.E.S. #1 is not *the first appearance of Jon Warren. It's* CowWatch #88.

WIZARD® TOP 100



Onslaught: X-Men #1

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of JUNE.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for June. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**). **(CE=Collector's Edition)**

1. Onslaught: X-Men #1 (Marvel)

2. Uncanny X-Men #335 (Marvel)
3. X-Men #55 (Marvel)
4. Wolverine #104 (Marvel)
5. Spawn #51 (Image)
6. Generation X #18 (Marvel)
7. X-Man #18 (Marvel)
8. Cable #34 (Marvel)
9. X-Force #57 (Marvel)
10. X-Factor #125 (Marvel)
11. Excalibur #100 (Marvel)
12. **Kingdom Come #2 (DC)**
13. Medieval Spawn/Witchblade #3 (Image)
14. Gen^{13}: The Unreal World #1 (Image)
15. **Incredible Hulk #444 (Marvel)**
16. **Badrock/Wolverine #1 (Image)**
17. **Avengers #401 (Marvel)**
18. **Fantastic Four #415 (Marvel)**
19. Amazing Spider-Man #414 (Marvel)
20. Spider-Man #71 (Marvel)
21. **Prophet/Cable #1 (Image)**
22. **Detective Comics #700 CE (DC)**
23. The F. Adv's. of Cyclops & Phoenix #3 (Mar.)
24. Sensational Spider-Man #7 (Marvel)
25. Spectacular Spider-Man #237 (Marvel)
26. Batman #533 (DC)
27. **Lady Death: The Odyssey #4 (Chaos!)**
28. **Witchblade #7 (Image)**
29. Star Wars: S. of the Empire #2 (D.H.)
30. WildC.A.T.s #31 (Image)
31. **Shi #10 (Crusade)**
32. Superman #114 (DC)
33. Batman Black & White #3 (DC)
34. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #53 (DC)
35. Action Comics #724 (DC)
36. Adventures of Superman #537 (DC)
37. The X-Files #19 (Topps)
38. Superman: The Man of Steel #59 (DC)
39. **Robin #32 (DC)**
40. Batman/Grendel II: Devil's Bones #1 (D.H.)
41. **Catwoman #36 (DC)**
42. Captain America #454 (Marvel)
43. **Preacher Special: Saint of Killers #1 (DC)**
44. Batman: Leg. of the Dark Knight #85 (DC)
45. Thor #501 (Marvel)
46. Detective Comics Annual #9 (DC)
47. Star Wars: Splinter of the M.E. #4 (D.H.)
48. Cyberforce #25 (Image)
49. **Spider-Man Unlimited #13 (Marvel)**
50. Sin City: That Yellow Bastard #5 (D.H.)
51. The Dreaming #3 (DC)
52. Superman Annual #8 (DC)
53. Venom: The Hunger #1 (Marvel)
54. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—B.: Tat. #1 (D.H.)
55. **Heavy Metal: I. Man/X-O Manowar #1 (Mar.)**
56. Green Lantern #77 (DC)
57. WetWorks #18 (Image)
58. The Flash #116 (DC)
59. X-Men 2099 #35 (Marvel)
60. **Preacher #16 (DC)**
61. Batman: GCPD #1 (DC)
62. Azrael #20 (DC)
63. Wonder Woman #112 (DC)
64. X-Nation #6 (Marvel)
65. The Maxx #25 (Image)
66. Professor X and the X-Men #10 (Marvel)
67. **X-O M./Iron Man: Heavy Metal (Acclaim)**
68. Iron Man #331 (Marvel)
69. Weapon Zero #5 (Image)
70. Avengelyne #3 (Maximum)
71. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #12 (Marvel)
72. Batman/Demon (DC)
73. **Eradicator #1 (DC)**
74. Darkchylde #2 (Maximum)
75. Azrael Annual #2 (DC)
76. Superboy #30 (DC)
77. Celestine #2 (Image)
78. What If? #88 (Marvel)
79. X-Men 2099: Oasis (Marvel)
80. **Silver Surfer #119 (Marvel)**
81. Backlash #21 (Image)
82. Spider-Man 2099 #46 (Marvel)
83. Daredevil #355 (Marvel)
84. Superboy Annual #3 (DC)
85. The X-Files Comics Digest #3 (Topps)
86. Bone #25 (Image)
87. **Aztek: The Ultimate Man #1 (DC)**
88. Impulse #16 (DC)
89. Ghost/Hellboy Special #2 (Dark Horse)
90. Savage Dragon #29 (Image)
91. Glory #13 (Image)
92. Deathblow #29 (Image)
93. Aquaman #23 (DC)
94. **Essential Vertigo: The Sandman #1 (DC)**
95. Hitman #4 (DC)
96. StormWatch #37 (Image)
97. New Warriors #74 (Marvel)
98. Atomik Angels #2 (Crusade)
99. The Books of Magic #27 (DC)
100. **Starman #21 (DC)**

AT THE TOP:

This month's headliner is the scorching-hot *Onslaught: X-Men #1*; Onslaught is a new character who's absolutely on fire in the market, and this issue—which reveals that he's also the X-Traitor—proves his power. This is the first Marvel intracompany crossover featuring all the X-Men, and not only did it boost the sales of all the connected mutant issues, but it also brought tie-ins *Hulk* and *Fantastic Four* to new order heights and kept *Avengers* at its high May post. Several $4.95 offerings hit it big: *Kingdom Come* made a strong showing, especially for a #2 issue; Alex Ross' amazing painting and Mark Waid's excellent writing form a phenomenal combo that make *KC* hot. The Image/Marvel crossovers fared pretty well, although it's apparent fans are more into Wolverine than Cable, both of whom made orders soar. The much-anticipated and much-purchased anniversary book *Detective #700* initiated "Legacy," the last Bat-title crossover and a sequel to the super-successful "Contagion" storyline.

IN THE MIDDLE:

Witchblade has joined Lady Death and Shi as one of today's top three Bad Girls, even though that trend's dying; what counts is that each heroine gives her company a consistently strong seller. "Legacy" positively affected the sales of chart-hopping tie-ins *Robin* and *Catwoman*. The *Preacher Special* gave the title its highest ranking ever, probably because it stars one of the book's most popular (and deadly) characters; the regular book jumped as well. The reunion of Luke Cage and Iron Fist, and a lower price, might've boosted *Spider-Man Unlimited* to a higher rank than normal.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

The Iron Man/X-O Manowar crossover has given Acclaim its first Top 100 showing in a long time. While the combining of two very linkable heroes and a $2.50 price (low for a comic crossover) assuredly helped, this may be a sign of good things to come at Acclaim. Three DC #1s did well: *Eradicator*, a Superman spinoff; *Aztek*, which writer Grant Morrison's fans were willing to try; and a re-presentation of *Sandman #1*, which scored high for a reprint book. The sleeper seller *Silver Surfer* leapt five notches; George Pérez's writing is gradually winning over new readers. James Robinson is doing the same for *Starman*, which made the chart for the first time.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the Wizard Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

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CHARACTER PROFILE: Daredevil

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Matthew Michael Murdock
AGE: early 30s
HEIGHT: 6'
WEIGHT: 200 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: red
EYE COLOR: blue, opaque
FIRST APPEARANCE: *Daredevil* #1
TITLE CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Daredevil*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Mr. Hyde, Kingpin, Bullseye, Cobra, Gladiator and numerous denizens of the New York underworld.

ORIGIN

Born and raised in New York's "Hell's Kitchen," Matt Murdock was the son of "Battling Jack" Murdock, a prize fighter who had turned to working as a mob enforcer to protect and provide for his son. Having sworn to Matt's mother to make a better life for Matt than the one he led himself, Jack Murdock taught young Matt to never fight and pushed him into academics. However, after being repeatedly harassed by bullies who mocked him with the name "Daredevil," Murdock began training in secret, without his father's approval or knowledge.

One day, in order to save a blind man from being run down in the street, Matt dove in front of a truck carrying radioactive waste. As a result of his intervention, the truck spilled some of its contents directly on Matt's eyes, blinding him.

Instead of being crippled for life, the radioactive waste heightened Matt's remaining senses to an incredible degree. Suddenly, Matt was gifted with a "radar" sense that allowed him to "see" the outline of an object's shape, as well as being able to hear a heartbeat, smell a scent miles away, feel ink on a printed page and move with uncanny grace and agility.

Shortly after the accident, Matt met a blind man named Stick who taught him how to use his powers and trained him in the martial arts. Matt went on to attend Columbia University with his friend Franklin "Foggy" Nelson, where both received their law degrees, and shortly thereafter started a law practice in New York City. Frustrated by the crimes that went untouched by the legal system, Matt adopted the identity of Daredevil and began his crusade against the "bullies" of the world that prey on the weak and defenseless.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Since Matt's debut on the New York scene as a crime-fighter, he has made many enemies, including Mr. Hyde, Cobra, the Owl and businessman Wilson Fisk, a.k.a. the Kingpin of Crime, who ran the East Coast's underworld. However, Matt has also had many allies in his fight, including Spider-Man, the Black Widow and his former college love, the deadly and mysterious Elektra.

Many of Matt's adventures have involved his mentor Stick, and Elektra, who had become a ninja-trained assassin since her college days. Matt and Elektra have fought together against many enemies, including the Hand, the ninja sect responsible for much of Elektra's training.

One of the most traumatic events in Matt's life occurred when Elektra, who the Kingpin had hired as his new assassin, was killed by the Kingpin's former assassin Bullseye. Elektra's death haunted Matt for months, and forced him to re-examine his life and his motivations.

Later in Matt's career, former DD-confidante-turned-porn-star Karen Page sold Matt's secret identity to the Kingpin's henchmen for a hit of heroin. The Kingpin took sadistic pleasure in destroying Matt's life, piece by piece. Matt did fight back however, and eventually recover, but the events forced him to give up his law practice for a time. And it reestablished Karen as his girlfriend.

A major turning point in Matt's life came during a battle with his evil duplicate, Hellspawn (created in *Infinity War*), when DD was forced to change his costume to an armored black-and-red version and go into hiding.

Following the death of Hellspawn, Matt "killed" his identity and assumed the name Jack Batlin. As Daredevil, he continued fighting crime in his black-and-red costume. Meanwhile, a Daredevil wearing DD's original yellow-and-red costume had started fighting crime in New York. The yellow-and-red Daredevil broke into Matt's apartment and shredded the black-and-red costume, forcing Matt to return to his trademark red costume. It was later revealed that the different costumed versions of Daredevil were fragments of Matt's personality that had taken on lives of their own. Finally confronting them all, Matt came to terms with his different personas and merged them back into one, resuming his life as blind lawyer Matt Murdock.

Since re-integrating his personality fragments, Matt has returned to the role of Daredevil (in his traditional red costume) with a new, fun-loving outlook on life.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

With Matt Murdock defending Mr. Hyde in court against a murder Hyde may not have committed, the thought that Hyde might go free to kill again will weigh heavily on Matt's mind. "*Daredevil* #357 will be the end of the Hyde storyline, and at that time, we'll also reveal what Karen's new job is," current *DD* writer Karl Kesel says. "After that, I'd like to introduce a new Jester and also do a one-issue story about what people think about Daredevil. Most people on the street don't know what DD's powers are, especially since he doesn't walk around saying, 'I'm blind and I have radar sense.' " Also, Kesel says that DD will have to take up some of the slack left in New York following the departure of the Fantastic Four and the Avengers in this summer's "Onslaught" crossover. "I really want to emphasize how much more responsibility he has to shoulder now that the big guns have left."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Want to dance with the devil? Why not try out some of these gems as picked by Kesel and the *Wizard* staff:

- ***Daredevil* #163**—Daredevil versus the Hulk! See DD take on someone he has absolutely no business fighting! "I think sometimes DD is at his best when he goes up against folks he has no chance of stopping. I think that was a really wonderful story," Kesel says.
- ***Daredevil* #181**—The cover blurb says it all: "Bullseye vs. Elektra—One Wins, One Dies." Bullseye, DD's deadliest enemy; Elektra, his former lover-turned-assassin. Unfortunately, DD has to clean up by taking on the victor!
- ***Daredevil* #208**—"The Most Dangerous Night of My Life." The mother of one of Daredevil's enemies built a house as a trap for Daredevil, with each level more dangerous than the next. Written by sci-fi author Harlan Ellison, this issue captures the grittiness and cunning of Daredevil.
- ***Daredevil* #227-#233**—In the classic "Born Again" storyline, the Kingpin finds out Matt's secret identity and destroys his life. Matt comes back from the verge of death and madness—but with a completely new status quo.
- ***Daredevil* #353**—Kesel and Cary Nord launch Daredevil off in a new direction, bringing him back to his law practice, reestablishing his ties with his former life and beginning the Mr. Hyde storyline.

SIMILAR TASTES

"The book I'm really pushing is *Cavewoman* by Budd Root," says Kesel. "There's a certain tone to *Cavewoman* that's similar to the tone in *Daredevil*, and I really recommend that people search that out and buy it. I also think of Daredevil as a street-level crime comic, and I think *Stray Bullets* would appeal to readers as well." W

Without his contacts, Matthew Brady is as blind as Matt Murdock, and also assumes a costumed identity to fight crime. As No-Seeum Man, Brady is ever vigilant to protect his city from villainy.

CBIQ

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

HEY! Wouldn't it be great if you were superstrong? Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could fly? Well, you can't! So come down to Earth, fanboy, and do the next best thing. Take this darn test and see what you really know about superstrength, levitation, magic, alternate futures and cybernetics. And after that we'll let you get back to your daydreams...'kay?

1. Spider-Man has not always traveled by web; he once had a different mode of transportation. What was this mover of people called?

A) the amazing Spider-Cycle
B) the sensational Spider-Copter
C) the spectacular Spider-Mobile
D) Dave, the flatulent Spider-Pony

2. Who is known as the Deadly Duo?

A) Batman and Robin
B) KillCat and Kid Avenger
C) Sandman and the original Green Goblin
D) Super-Rooster and Rhode Island Red

3. What does that cool corpse, Spawn, carry within the dark and eerie folds of his cape?

A) a bulletproof, kevlar-like fabric weaved in the depths of Hell
B) pictures of the ones he loves the most, his family and friends
C) an arsenal of weapons given to him by the long-dead Machiavelli
D) A whole lot of worms. Man, this guy could use a bath.

4. What was Lois Lane's reason for giving Clark Kent back the engagement ring and dumping Superman?

A) He nearly let Lois die instead of letting the Joker get away with his diabolical plan to kill others.
B) Lois felt the world needed Superman more than she needed a husband, and therefore she could never truly compete for Superman's attention.
C) Superman unintentionally let Lois' former flame Jeb Friedman, die in a mob hit while rescuing Lois.
D) Lois caught Clark downloading his umpteenth shot of Teri Hatcher from the Internet while mumbling "Yeah...come to poppa, baby...oooo...oooooh!"

5. Which evil demon (That's kinda redundant, isn't it?) gave Johnny Blaze the power to become the original Ghost Rider?

A) Malebolgia
B) Mephisto
C) Zarathos
D) Keebleros

6. In the future, what are the son and daughter of the former Flash, Barry Allen, known as?

A) Double Trouble
B) Dynamic Duo
C) the Tornado Twins
D) the Wonder-Twins

7. Who has not contributed his or her voice to a character on "The Simpsons"?

A) Michael Jackson
B) Dana Carvey
C) Elizabeth Taylor
D) Dustin Hoffman

8. In the very first issue of *The X-Files*, what is it that seems to be causing the deaths of the very people that seek it?

A) an alien formula that supposedly grants immortality
B) a crystal that emits an incredible amount of energy
C) a computer disk that contains the coordinates of the nearest planet with life
D) the written prophecy of a holy woman

9. Nightcrawler's mom is one bad mother...shut my mouth! I'm just talking about Nightcrawler's mother—can you dig it? Who is she?

A) Mystique
B) Moira MacTaggert
C) Magda Lehnsherr (Magneto's dead wife)
D) Eva Braun...guess who his father is (Shudder!)

10. In Vertigo's *Preacher*, what rock star influenced Sheriff Root's son to attempt suicide?

A) Kurt Cobain
B) Ozzy Osbourne
C) Jim Morrison
D) Jimi Hendrix

11. What does Joseph Jones have to say in order to be transformed into Guy Gardner's favorite superhero, General Glory?

A) "Lady Liberty, hear my plea, for the land of the brave and the home of the free."
B) "Oh, Torch of Liberty, light my way, so freedom will be won this day."
C) "Stars and Stripes, grant me the power, so glory will prevail in this darkest hour."
D) "Well, hand me my nylons and pass me my purse, I'm just another lame-o in the DC Universe."

12. What Native American tribe does the Fantastic Four's pal, Wyatt Wingfoot, belong to?

A) Sioux
B) Keewazi
C) Algonquin
D) Hakowee

13. In the future era of the Guardians of the Galaxy, what artifact does Dr. Doom use as part of his costume?

A) the adamantium-sheathed bones of Wolverine
B) Dr. Strange's cloak of levitation
C) Quasar's quantum bands
D) Iron Man's armor chest plate

14. Who assumed the identity of the new Overlord, Savage Dragon's foe?

A) Star
B) Mace
C) Frank Darling
D) Savage Dragon himself

15. In last year's bizarre *Druid* mini-series, who killed Dr. Druid?

A) Daimon Hellstrom
B) Nekra
C) Modred the Mystic
D) Baron Mordo

16. Who was the diabolical degenerate that shot and paralyzed Batman's buddy Barbara Gordon, a.k.a. Batgirl?

A) Bane
B) Joker
C) Two-Face
D) Scarecrow

17. Who is the mystery man who needed help with his lovelife and recently kidnapped Doc Samson to listen to his problems?

A) Rick Jones
B) Molecule Man
C) Omnibus
D) Matt Talbot

18. When Axwell Tiberius (the Monkeyman of Monkeyman and O'Brien) was brought to this dimension, what did he bring with him?

A) the decapitated head of another giant gorilla-like creature
B) the weapon that destroyed his own planet, the molecular transphaser
C) a deadly virus that has started to infect humans
D) A fake green card, so let's deport his monkey-ass! America for Americans! *¡Arriba!*

19. In *Spawn/WildC.A.T.s* #4, we discover that the future Zealot turns out to be...

A) Grifter
B) Tapestry
C) Voodoo
D) Cyan

20. Where did that tough-guy leader of X-Force, Cable, get that funky metallic arm?

A) It's one of his mutant powers, to turn his regular arm into an ultra-powerful cybernetic arm.
B) He received this adamantium arm from Department H when he was chosen to be the second Weapon X after Wolverine defected to the X-Men.
C) It's the result of a technovirus that has infected his body.
D) While flying an experimental aircraft for the government, Cable crashed and lost both his legs, his right arm and one of his eyes. The government decided to invest six million dollars and give him bionic replacement parts. Now he's faster...stronger...able to nail Farrah Fawcett better than ever before. W

THINK YOU KNOW YOUR COMIC BOOK TRIVIA? WELL, LET'S JUST SEE IF YOUR MISPLACED EGO CAN COMPARE WITH THE "SUPEREGOS" OF THOSE HEROES WHO HAVE DESIGNATED THEMSELVES WITH GRANDIOSE NAMES OF GREATNESS. THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE, THE BIGGER THE MELON THESE SUPERGUYS HAVE ON THEIR OVERLY MUSCLED SHOULDERS.
LOOK IN THIS MONTH'S "BULLPEN" FOR THE ANSWERS.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	**Mister Miracle.** He's cool and everything, but if he could really perform miracles, his new series wouldn't've been canceled.
5-14	**Supreme.** Anybody who'd take the name of something you might buy at a Dairy Queen and still take himself seriously also probably refers to himself in the third person.
15-19	**Mister Terrific, Defender of Fair Play.** Hello...? You have no powers and will be strangled to death by a lame villain named Spirit King. With no powers, he must have been in the superhero biz just to wear a mask and tights.
20	**Mister Fantastic.** "And I'll call myself...Mister Fantastic!" To which the Thing responded, "Yeah...okay."

WIZARD'S comic-crammed crossword puzzle

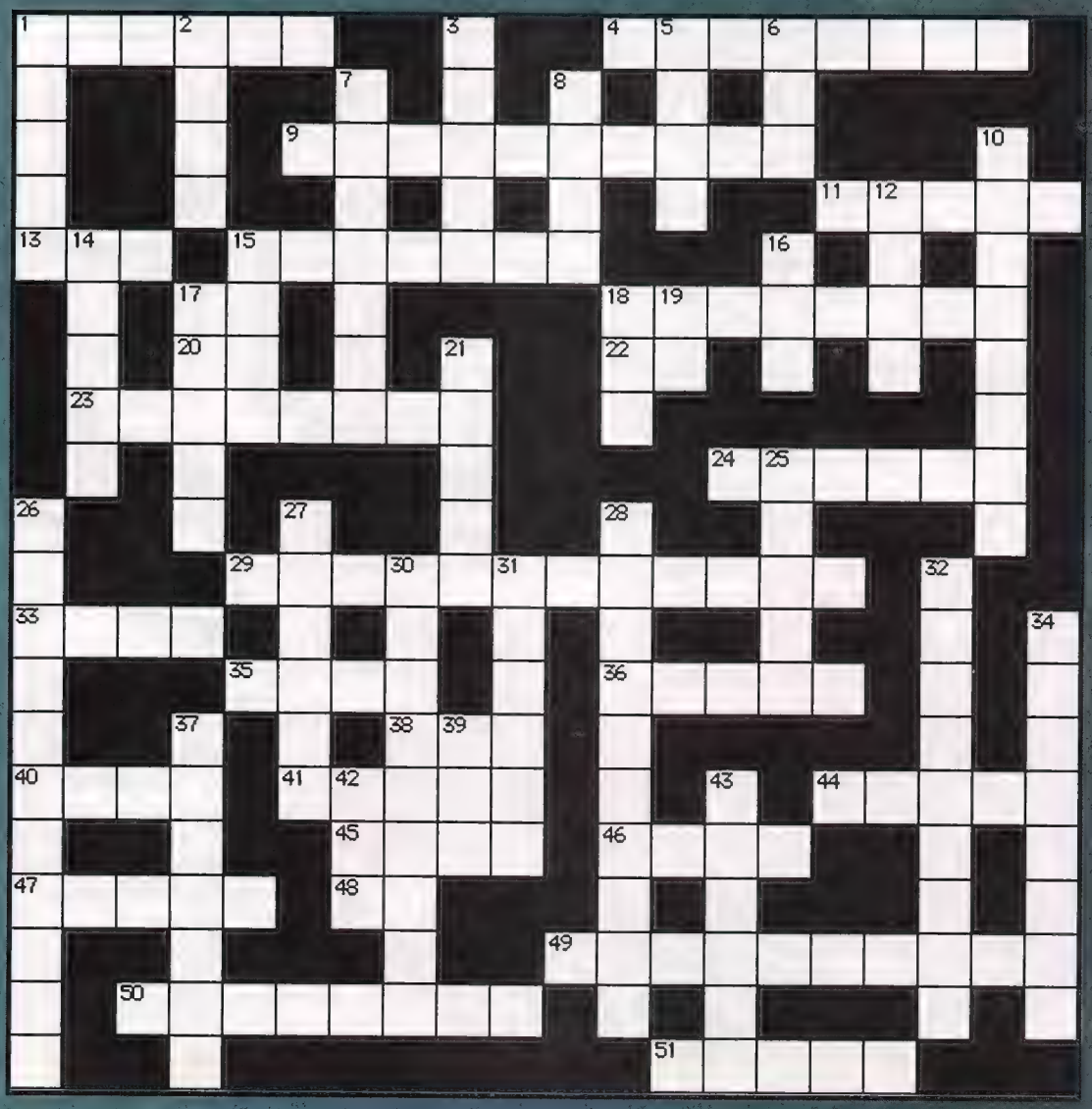
Test your comic book knowledge in our very own homemade crossword puzzle! The answers can be found in this month's "Bullpen."

Across

1. _____ *Washington Goes to War*
4. Vertigo's 1993 crusaders
9. Changed Al Simmons into Spawn
11. Legion time guy; Rond _____
13. Comics are a form of _____
15. Areala's Nazi nemesis
17. *Impulse* artist; initials
18. Cyberforce's quick chick
20. Does 13 across for *X-Men*; initials
22. "Addams Family" cousin
23. Namor's WWII superteam
24. Female Captain Marvel's new name
29. *Flash #1* foe
33. Asgard's Big Daddy
35. "Future Past" survivor
36. X-Factor's Polaris; _____ Dane
38. The Psychic Girl
40. Entity's main heroine; _____ X
41. Like the Clench
44. Giant Japanese superhero; _____man
45. Harris' one-shot team; Q-_____
46. Big-headed Marvel watcher
47. DC's talking tiger; _____-Tawny
48. Snake-Eyes' team; _____ Joe
49. Malibu superteam
50. Orion's rat-bastard father
51. Dr. Strange nemesis; Baron _____

Down

1. Aquaman adversary; Black _____
2. Thunder God
3. Morpheus' other name
5. New Genesis ruler; _____ father
6. Played Duck squeeze; _____ Thompson
7. Dragon's girlfriend
8. Capt. Kirk's slow reptilian foe
10. "Secret Hospital" star
12. Egyptian goddess
14. "Holey rusted metal!"
15. Namor's whale-like foe
16. Madman's honey
17. She couldn't save Jamie Madrox
18. What Dr. Doom's buddies call him
19. The original X-File?
21. Intangible Imperial Guardian
25. One-third of the Warriors Three
26. Hulk's scaly enemy
27. Broadway Comics bad girl
28. Place you'd hear "Parker!!"
30. Kherubim enemy; singular
31. Wonder Woman's weapon
32. WWII tank haunter
34. Disfigured DC cowboy
37. DC winged warrior
39. Dazzler's nickname
42. Ted Kord's vehicle
43. Fishy JLA nemesis



JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything that we couldn't stretch into a full-page newsy thing

by David Borak and the *Wizard* staff

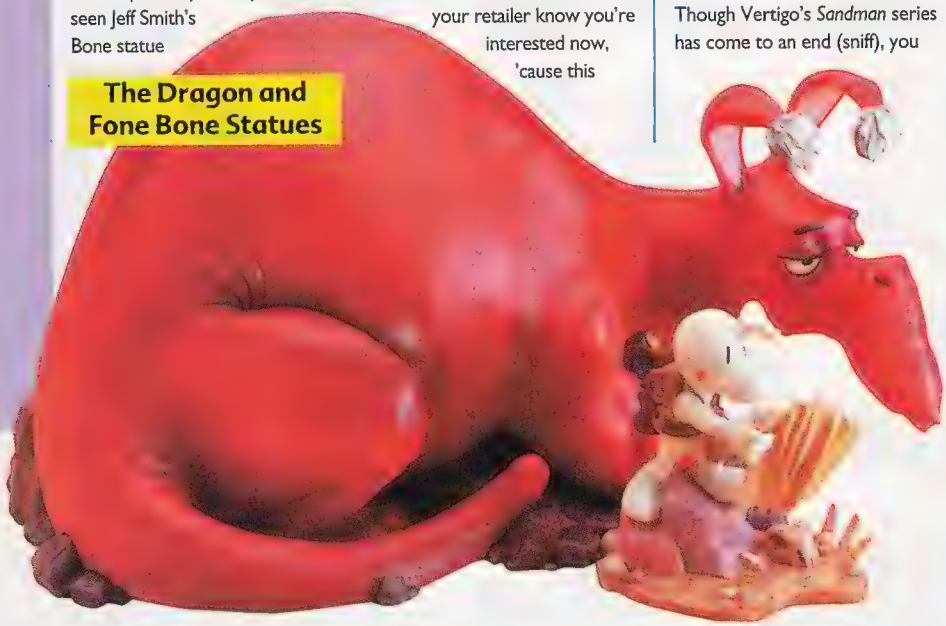
THAT'S A HELL OF A BUST

That Randy Bowen is damned talented! And speaking o' damned, check out this awesome limited-edition Hellboy bust coming your way this August from Bowen Designs. Based on Mike Mignola's spooky paranormal detective, this fully painted bust stands five inches tall and will only cost ya $35!!! And keep your eyes peeled in the future, 'cause Randy Bowen and his cadre o' sculptors are hard at work on their next project: an X-Files line based on the creatures from the hit TV show! Details as soon as we get 'em!

Hellboy Bust Statue

THAT DRAGON'S HUGE!

Well, it's finally on its way. You've probably already seen Jeff Smith's Bone statue released by Dark Horse. And now comes a gorgeous limited-edition cold-cast Red Dragon statue sculpted by the master Randy Bowen. You'll quickly notice that this Dragon is proportional to the Bone statue. Yowza! Plus, that cute li'l bug Ted is conveniently sitting on the Dragon's finger. Measuring some 8" X 13" X 8" tall, this mammoth of a statue is pretty much the size of an overweight cat! Look for it in November, but be sure to let your retailer know you're interested now, 'cause this puppy's only limited to 2000 pieces and will set ya back $195.



The Dragon and Fone Bone Statues

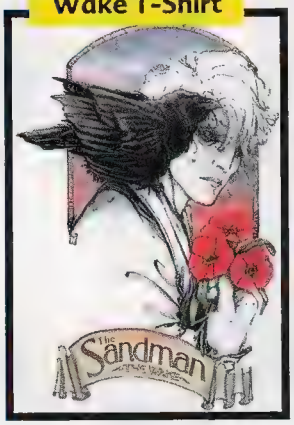
SAME BAT-TIME

Well, it's not as cool as the video-phone watch Bruce Wayne used in "Batman Forever," but it's close! On sale in October, DC Comics presents a Batman holographic watch featuring a full-color 3-D hologram of the Dark Knight on the watchface, based on art by Graham Nolan. This limited-issue, quartz-battery-powered timepiece comes with a black leather band and metal casing bound to make Robin squeal with jealousy. You should be able to find this watch in comic shops everywhere with a suggested retail price of $59.95.

WAKE UP YOUR WARDROBE

Though Vertigo's *Sandman* series has come to an end (sniff), you can still show your support by wearing the new Sandman: The Wake T-shirt for only $16.95 ($19.95 for you XXL types). Michael Zulli provides the gorgeous art for this one, featuring Morpheus and Matthew the Raven looking as melancholy as ever. The 100% cotton heavyweight from Graphitti Designs is due to ship in August to comic shops everywhere.

Sandman: The Wake T-Shirt



CHAOTIC CARDS

Go Fish has never been this evil before! Yes, that's right, you can now play your favorite card games with the Chaos! Comics Playing Cards. Styled as 54-card poker decks, each card set features all of your favorite Chaos! characters: Lady Death, Purgatory, Chastity, Smiley, Evil Ernie, Bedlam, Cremator, Matthias and Little Evil. Graphitti Designs and Chaos! will be shipping these cards to comic shops this August, packaged in a box with two decks for a mere $15.95.

"Lillith" Art Print

Product of the Month

STRONGER THAN A DICTIONARY

Are those trade paperbacks just falling off your bookshelf? Can nothing stop them? Looks like a job for Superman! DC Comics presents the Superman/Doomsday Bookends on sale in comic stores this October. These fully painted cold cast porcelain sculptures feature the Man of Steel slugging the unstoppable villain through a shattering wall (and through all of your books!) with Doomsday exploding out the other side. Based on designs by Don Jurgens and sculpted by William Paquel (DC's Swamp Thing Statue), the bookends have a price tag of $215 and are bound to keep even the toughest books in place.

THE DAWNING OF A NEW PRINT

Wow, that Joseph Michael Linsner guy is hot! Sirius presents the first in a series of fine art prints by the *Dawn* creator featuring "Lillith." For only $35 you get a painted print by Linsner of this seductive young vampire, limited to only 333 signed and numbered editions. Each 16" by 20" print is shipped flat and ready to display. Look for it sometime in August at your local comics store.

SPIDEY TAKES ON PAPER

Keep your papers safe with the help of Spider-Man. Marvel Comics and Creative Licenses have joined forces to bring you the Spider-Man paperweight. Featuring Spidey in the1960's crouch position popularized by John Romita Sr., this actual working paperweight is currently available for $40.

A STATUE TO MAXX AND RELAX WITH

Keep an eye out for Moore Creations' latest statue: The Maxx. Limited to just 3000 pieces, this fully painted, cold-cast porcelain statue features Sam Kieth's The Maxx slashing his way through doomed Iszes. Sculpted by Clayburn Moore, the Maxx stands 10 1/2 inches tall and 12 inches long. It ships in September in a full-color collector's box for $150.

Maxx Statue

A CD-ROM TO CROW ABOUT

Any die-hard fan of James O'Barr's "The Crow" should look for Graphix Zone's new *The Crow Complete Interactive Collection* CD-ROM due out this August. It will feature selected portions of the comic book series, interviews, a biography of James O'Barr, and information on both "Crow" films including complete screenplays, storyboards, music and much more! The disk also features never-before-seen stuff like the Skull Cowboy scene omitted from the first movie and a sketchbook of art provided by O'Barr specially for this CD-ROM. The CD-ROM will be available for both Windows and Macintosh for $29.95.

HEY! Are you a company putting out some really nifty comic-related merchandise like Galactus sneakers, Captain Kirk canned hams or even a Green Arrow shaving kit? Well, we'd love to run it in our groovy Junk Drawer section. (Of course, we'd also like sculptures, novels, T-shirts, games, magnets, buttons, etc.) Please send any info to:

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JUNK DRAWER video games

by Steve Brown

Gen[13]: The Video Game

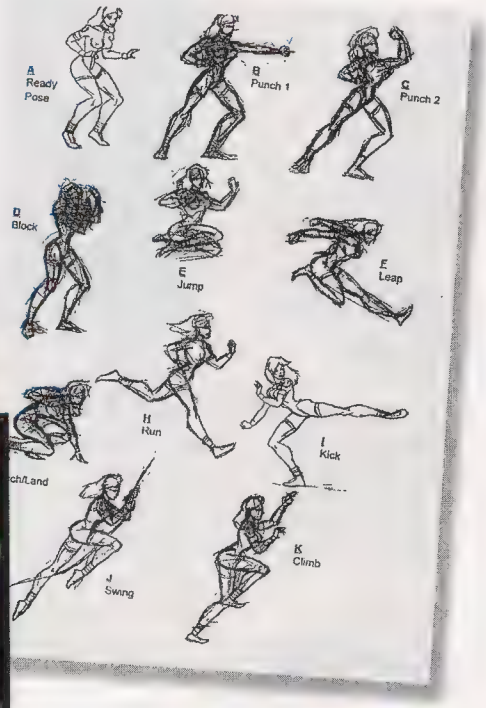
Deep in the studios of Electronic Arts exists a group of talented programmers and animation experts working full-time on what promises to be the greatest comic book video game translation ever. *Gen[13]* is not only a super-hot comic published by WildStorm, it's also one of the hottest vid-licenses around.

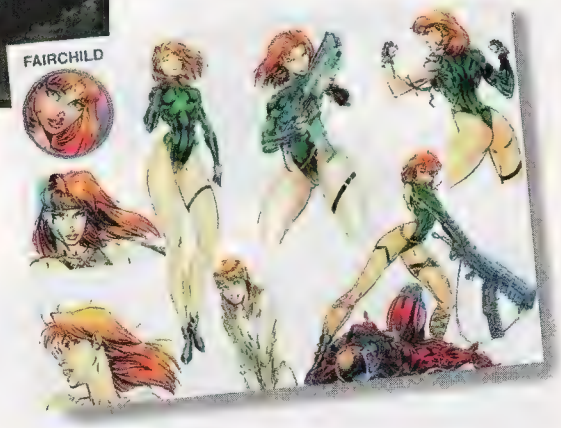
Jim Lee, the main man behind WildStorm, received plenty of high cash offers (Acclaim is rumored to have been one of many disappointed suitors with declined bids) before deciding to settle down with EA. Why EA? That should be pretty obvious: a great track record of producing awesome and playable games.

Wizard was granted an exclusive glimpse into the early production of this groundbreaking video game. *Gen[13]* is not expected to hit stores until the summer of 1997—along with the direct-to-video "Gen[13]" animated movie. But if things go smoothly, Gen[13] fans will find it well worth the wait! The Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn and the forthcoming Nintendo 64 are the initial planned platforms, with a PC Windows version to be released sometime after that.

The actual game has gone through many stages of development and WildStorm's been there every step of the way. The company sent EA plenty of visual character specifications to insure that all the Gen[13] members are intricately portrayed—front, back and sideways. The goal of the EA production team is to not only duplicate the comic's immensely popular art style, but to actually create a textured 3-D *Gen[13]* video game. While the programming itself is a lengthy and laborious process, EA has started working on the character Fairchild. At first glance, you'd think this art was for some lame intro screen or end-of-level scene and not representative of the actual character from the game. Wrong! This funky lookin' pic of Fairchild is an actual game sprite. As for the backgrounds, they're being designed like *Donkey Kong Country*, a fully rendered 3-D environment. Calling *Gen[13]* a side-scrolling game would be selling short what the animators are trying to accomplish. The storyline of the game involves an untold tale that will run concurrently with the *Gen[13]* comic book in '97. Plans are underway for a cross debut of some new villains as well. And a full collaboration with Jim Lee on the designing of the new bosses is just one more cool aspect of the game.

Gen[13] will feature 15-20 levels, sandwiched bonus levels and unique boss sequences. There's also a partner aspect that lets you to toggle between the various characters, allowing for fresh perspectives and varied attack strategies. Cheats and a combination password/memory chip save-feature promise to keep you from losing your mind. And to further entice you, EA is approaching this game with a sexy slant, rather than the current trend of blood and guts. Now if that don't get ya droolin', you better check for a pulse!

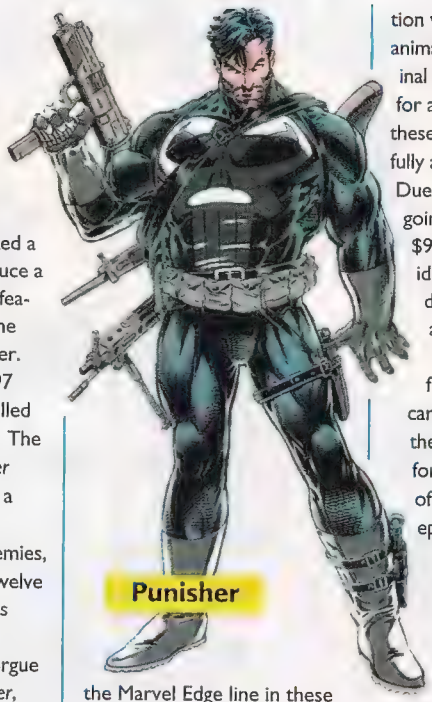




THE PUNISHER AND GHOST RIDER LIVE

Crystal Dynamics has inked a deal with Marvel to produce a pair of video games, one featuring Ghost Rider and the other starring the Punisher. Both games are early 1997 hopefuls, and are being billed as PlayStation exclusives. The 32-bit video game *Punisher* throws Frank Castle into a brutal 3-D environment packed with plenty o' enemies, plot twists and bullets. Twelve deadly weapon power-ups lead to a triple-digit body count that'll leave the morgue working overtime. *Punisher*, with its hard-hittin' arcade-style combat, promises to leave you shell-shocked. Personally, it sounds like another *Doom*-type, first-person yawnfest. I get the feeling that Crystal Dynamics got these two character properties dirt cheap—but hopefully they'll take a chance and release something worthwhile. Maybe they'll even *read* the comics and incorporate some cool story elements into the game.

What little info I could find about *Ghost Rider* is that it will feature 3-D-rendered graphics with dynamic camera tracking. We can only hope for a *Road Rash*-type game with fully explorable environments. Look for a bevy of cameos and guest stars from the Marvel Edge line in these two new games.



Punisher

THE SUPER FRIENDS INVADE YOUR HOME COMPUTER

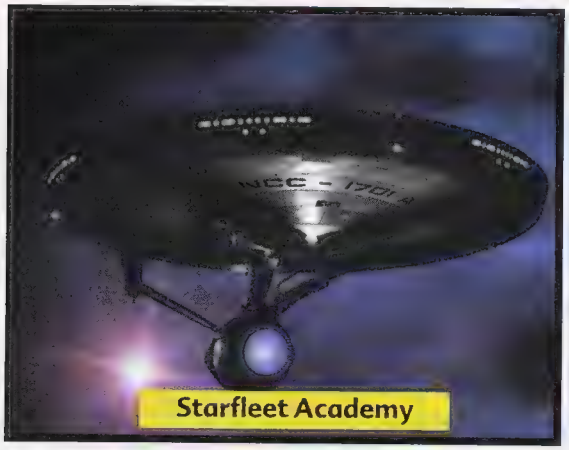
Inverse Ink has plans to release a series of CD-ROM comic books based on DC's characters. These comics will utilize the '60s Filmation animated artwork, and Superman, Batman, Aquaman and Superboy are the heroes set to appear. Inverse Ink will use its graphic comic book engine to combine the original DC video animation with comic style art, new animation, morphs and an original musical score. Updated for a multimedia '90s feel, these vintage stories will hopefully appeal to fans of all ages. Due in late summer, these are going to retail for a bargain $9.99. It sounds like a good idea, but I can't help wondering how you can inject anything remotely modern into those mostly fun, but hopelessly dated cartoons. You'd think there'd be a bigger market for a general video release of all those "Super Friends" episodes. Hmm...

VISIT STARFLEET ACADEMY ON YOUR PLAYSTATION

Interplay has a *Starfleet Academy* video game in the works, planned for a Christmas '96 release. *Starfleet Academy* is the first and only adventure/simulator that puts the player in command of the Starship Enterprise. Battle 30 classic alien ships while attempting to graduate. The first PlayStation Trek game, *Starfleet Academy*, allows you to actually attend the famous school. Full-motion video displays of Kirk, Spock and Sulu interact realistically with *you* as the budding cadet. *Starfleet*'s graphics are 3-D-rendered. It's probably a souped-up version of the decent SNES title of the same name. With 27 missions, and rife with subplots and internal politics, this could be a winner for both Trekkies and us normal folks.

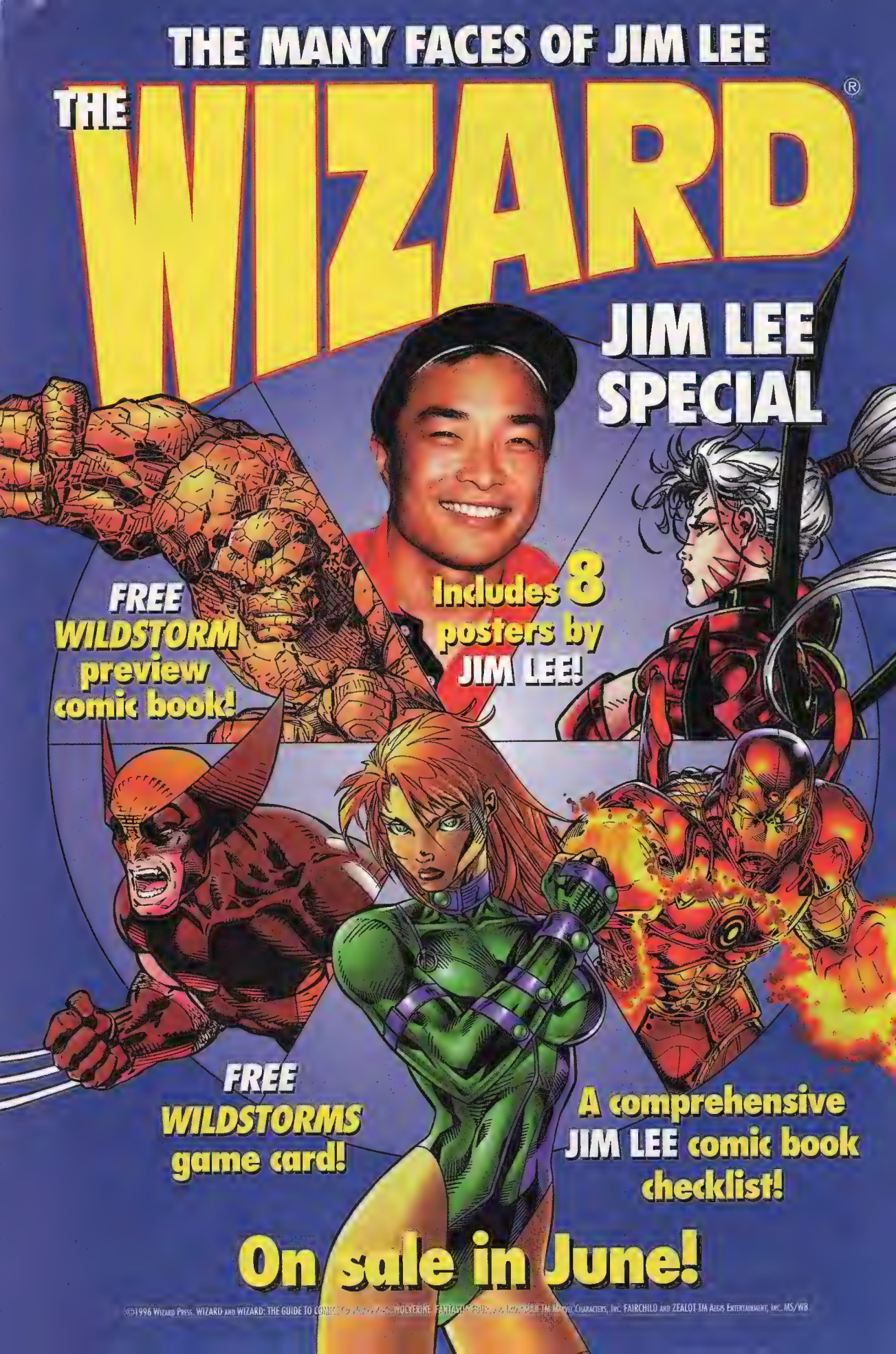
GO MEDIEVAL ON THOSE ALIENS

Having trouble kickin' some Alien butt from the PlayStation's *Aliens Trilogy* game? Well stop yer whimpering, put on yer combat boots and get ready to kick some acid-filled tail! Yessiree, with this here cheat code (1G0TP1NK8C1DB00TS0N), you'll be knee-deep in dead alien buggers before you can say, "Newt!" Whaddaya gotta do? Simple. Get to the password screen and type in the cheat code. The game will then tell you that the cheat is activated. So head back to the intro screen and choose cheat mode for unlimited weapons, ammo, invincibility and level select. Then go nuts!



Starfleet Academy

Aliens Trilogy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bullpen

Mmm...fish

There was more raw fish than people.

Completely unaware of what he was getting himself into, Wizardite Bob Marshall threw down the gauntlet: None could eat more sushi (read: raw fish) than he! Drawn by the challenge (and the notion of eating a great deal), fellow staffers Jim McLauchlin, Andrew Kardon and Scott Gramling took up the gauntlet and met on the battlefield: Sho-Chiku Japanese restaurant in Nanuet, N.Y. (during "All You Can Eat" sushi night, of course). What followed was the most disturbing violation of nature's laws ever witnessed. While Bob came in a measly fourth by downing 46 chunks of raw fish in the hour time limit, Andrew had a more respectable showing at 56 and Jim hit the wall with a whopping 60. Scott "The Pit" Gramling shattered the laws of supply and demand and clocked in at...66. For those of you keeping track at home, that's a combined 228 pieces of raw fish, all wrapped in seaweed, knocked back in one hour. "I thought 55 pieces or so would be enough to win, but quickly realized I was facing some stiff competition," belched Gramling that night. "I had a reputation...excuse me...to uphold and refused to let my loyal fans go home disappointed." We're just shocked no one died.

Mmm...balls

Though off to a slow start, the mighty Wizard Press softball team is once again clad in crappy uniforms and hungry for action. Led by the fearless (and pantsless) Brian Cunningham, we kicked off the season by losing 6-5 to NYNEX. We followed that with another rousing defeat at the hands of Active Media (not like these team names mean anything to you), this time 12-9. Undaunted by the fact that everyone's better than us, the growing-more-bitter-by-the-game Wizard Press team took the field against Sensormatic and proved they suck more than we do, taking home our first win of the season! Having followed that with another win (and loss), our record is 2 wins and 3 losses. "We're a much better team than the box scores indicate," said coach Cunningham. "All our games have been pretty close. And who cares if we get pummeled and humiliated and whupped like mimes? We're just out to have fun." Good excuse.

TOP TEN

Top 10 ways to tell the difference between the Crow and a mime

10. If it's beating someone up, it's the Crow. If someone's beating it up, it's a mime.
9. People want to give mimes the bird. The Crow already has one.
8. Poke it in the eye with a stick. If it says "ouch," it's the Crow.
7. Mimes are French, and the Crow never surrenders!
6. To become a Crow, you must experience great pain and suffering. To watch a mime, you will experience great pain and suffering.
5. No one thinks it's cool when mimes come back from the dead.
4. Mimes can't stand up to multiple gunshot wounds. (We tried.)
3. Only some people can accept the Crow's need to kill his tormentors. Everyone understands the need to kill mimes.
2. The Crow kills bad people. All a mime kills is a good day in New York City.
1. If Brandon Lee had played a mime, he'd be alive today and it'd be his career that'd need the reviving.

MORT OF THE MONTH

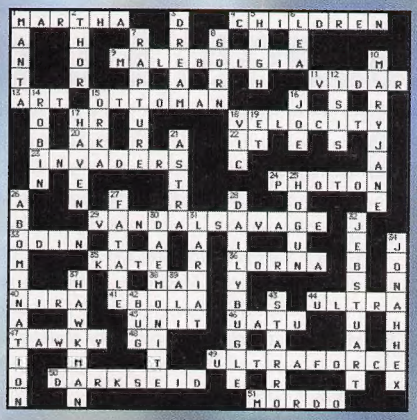
ROY RAYMOND, TV DETECTIVE

"I'm Roy Raymond...TV detective." Y'know, I feel like I'm trapped in a weird comic book version of "MST3K," forced to dig through old comics for the worst ideas to ever be crapped onto the comics page. And I don't even have any robot buddies. Anyway, the ol' TV Detective's claim to fame was his "Impossible—But True!" TV show, where he exposed wannabe psychics, inventors and the like as frauds. And that's it. No power ring, no superspeed, no monkey sidekick. A guy, his bad tie and dozens of home viewers. Even UPN wouldn't touch this guy. Probably.

MORT-O-METER:

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS

from page 189



CONTEST WINNERS

ISSUE #55

SHI HAIKU: Melissa Neff, APO, AE, England

Here's Melissa's winning haiku!

A great warrior:
Her sword swift, her spirit strong.
The legend is made.

PHOENIX AFTERMATH: Jared Pike, Brownsville, Texas

Here are the answers!

1. Prime
2. a. The Progeny; b. Theta Virus
3. Mastodon

WHITE ZOMBIE: Tobias Caballero, Denver, Colo.

MAGIC: Everett Tucker, San Diego, Calif.

C.B.I.Q. ANSWERS

from page 188

1. C	6. C	11. A	16. B
2. B	7. B	12. B	17. B
3. D	8. D	13. A	18. A
4. B	9. A	14. B	19. D
5. C	10. A	15. B	20. C

WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

SERGIO ARAGONÉS

Sergio Aragonés may be a funny guy, but he's not a *funny* guy. "I'm not really much of a joker," admits the 59-year-old mastermind behind such classic ha-ha's as *Groo*, *Plop!* and, of course, *Mad*. "As a matter of fact, I'm a very bad joke teller. I have real bad timing. But I can think up humorous situations."

And it's a style of drawing and storytelling that the veteran of such titles as *House of Mystery* and *Bat Lash* (with occasional side trips into *Wonder Woman*, *Jonah Hex* and *Destroyer Duck*) describes as strictly personal. "My style is very much me," he says in an understated Spanish accent (though not nearly as broken as is parodied in his comics). "As I've become more of a professional, what I did became more of a planned thought. But ultimately it's still my point of view and my attitude. It's still me."

Aragonés was born in Spain in 1937, but moved with his family to Mexico during the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. "I guess I was a pretty normal kid. I was a bit of a loner. I spent a lot of time drawing and thinking about stories. I can't remember *not* doing it."

Aragonés took his obsession to the University of Mexico, but kept it hidden until a friend submitted some of his drawings to the Mexican humor magazine *Ja Ja*, which began publishing his work on a regular basis. The magazine *Mañana* soon fell in line. In 1962, Aragonés took his south-of-the-Border reputation north to America, where he found the market less than thrilled with him. "I went to a lot of magazines and everybody said my work was crazy. But they all said I should go to *Mad* magazine. I knew *Mad* from Mexico, but I never wanted to approach them because I felt their stuff was too good for what I was doing. But *Mad* looked at my portfolio, liked what they saw and started giving me work."

Beginning with *Mad* #76 (dated January 1963), Aragonés' work has appeared regularly in that magazine. His *Mad* work invariably led him into comics and, in particular, into the offices of DC Comics. "DC felt my stuff was crazy, too, but at the time was thinking about attempting some humor books and felt my craziness would fit. I started out doing bits in *Young Romance* and then started up *Plop!*, besides doing more straightforward stuff, and eventually started *Groo* in 1982 [at Pacific Comics, followed by stints at Marvel and Image Comics], which I consider the high point of my career. It's a mixture of everything I think is funny."

Aragonés' current adventures include the one-shots *Sergio Aragonés Destroys DC* and *Sergio Aragonés Massacres Marvel*. He also recently did a cover for a *Mad* book and, with fellow comic book guy Mark Evanier, is making overtures to the movie industry with some original concepts.

Aragonés offers that while the medium will eventually branch out beyond the printed page, his style will always remain the same. "It's crazy. And it will always be crazy."

by Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
A Spanish book called *The Chamaco*.

Favorite book of all time...
The Spirit

Favorite work of your own...
"The Marginals" (for *Mad Magazine*)

Comics you read...
Love and Rockets, Bone, Usagi Yojimbo

The one person you'd like to meet...
Stan Laurel of Laurel & Hardy

Superpower you would most want...
To fly.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
Anything with chocolate.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
As a kid it was my electric trains. As an adult, my model ships.

Things you collect...
Original artwork and figurines

Person who would play you in a movie...
Gilbert Roland (Latin leading man of the 1940s and 1950s)

Favorite cartoon...
"One Froggy Evening"

People you would most like to work with...
Anybody doing special effects for movies.

Favorite musical performer...
Pablo Cassales

Favorite TV show...
"The Simpsons"

Last good movie you saw...
"Il Postino"

Last good book you read...
The Collected Works of Pablo Neruda

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd like to be able to see into the past.

W

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